



## TIME OF GRACE®

# Abortion: What Does God Say? Abortion and the Womb, Parts 1 & 2

## Study Notes

### Summary

Abortion is one of culture's most complex debates, spilling onto street corners, courtrooms, and social media threads. But what does the Bible have to say about this issue, if anything? How should followers of Jesus feel personally about abortion, given the multitude of reasons that unplanned pregnancies are ended?

- The primary issue is \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 Common Answers to the Issue:
  1. We become people at \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. We become people at \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. We become people at \_\_\_\_\_.
    - “Before twenty-two weeks, a fetus is not in any way equal to ‘a baby’ or ‘a child.’ . . . Every one of the fetal parts—head, body, limbs—like a puzzle that has to be put back together. . . . I place them together, re-creating the fetus in the pan. I have done this so many times that it has become routine: no matter what these parts may look like, this is organic matter that does not add up to anything that can live on its own.”—Dr. Willie Parker
  4. We become people at \_\_\_\_\_.
    - “The simple truth is this: if a sperm and egg come together when a child is desired, a human being is born. But if a sperm and egg come together when a woman knows in her bones that it is not the right time for her to be a mother, then perhaps what is born is her own confident agency over her life.”—From *Shout Your Abortion*
  5. We become people at \_\_\_\_\_.
- Luke 1:41: When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb.

- **Luke 2:12:** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.
- **Psalm 139:13,16:** <sup>13</sup> For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my unformed body.
- **Psalm 51:5:** Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- God creates people at \_\_\_\_\_.
- **1 John 1:9:** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Read and think about 1 John 1:8-10. How would you apply these words to the issue of abortion?
2. If everything in the universe was created by and, therefore, belongs to God, what questions should Christians ask that non-Christians might not consider when addressing an issue like abortion?
3. Evaluate: A good church should be a place where abortion is talked about openly.

### *Homework for Next Week*

Read Acts 2:42-47.

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Abortion: What Does God Say? Abortion and the Womb Part 1**  
Psalm 82:3, Luke 1:41, Psalm 139:13 + 16, Psalm 51:5, 1 John 1:9  
June 6, 2021

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

Much like human sexuality, abortion feels like one of those issues that if you just drop a little comment here or there, you just leave people with too many what ifs and what abouts and questions and objections. It's not a topic that you can cover in a tweet; it's something that takes quantity time.

Some of you have had abortions and many of you haven't. Some of you have walked that road with your sister, your niece, your daughter, your best friend, or your roommate and for others of you, it's simply a theoretical conversation. Some of you have encouraged abortions; some of you have prayed against abortions. Some of you have voted pro-life; some of you have considered yourself pro-choice. Some of you say that you're personally against abortion but, politically, you stand in a different position. Some of you think this is the wrong thing to talk about in a church where we should be focusing on Jesus and forgiveness and grace, while others of you say if 60 million abortions have happened since Roe v. Wade became the law of this land, then someone who claims to stand and speak the words of God needs to speak and say something. Some of you watching on TV right now are tempted to change the channel while others of you just put down the remote and you're going to listen to every single word until this message is done.

That's you, that's us, and that's why it's taken me a long time to get to this. But friends, the time has come. As long as unplanned pregnancies happen in your family and in mine, as long as in our community and in our spiritual community that we call our church, you and I are going to have to decide about abortion – legal or illegal, common or not – this issue will affect our lives and so it's good for us as the people of God to know what kind of things the word of God says. And so we're going to take time; not just a sentence or a paragraph or a whole message but lots and lots and lots of time so that you and I can have a deep, sensitive, full of grace and truth understanding about this topic.

I want to warn you, just in case you're checking the clock, I rarely bring with me two pages of notes when I stand up here but today is going to be different. So turn off your watch, turn up your brain, because here's what we're going to do. Before this series is done, there's three really big things I want to cover. I want to talk about the womb, I want to talk about the woman, and I want to talk about the world. I want to talk about the womb and life and what the Bible has to say. I want to zoom out and talk about the woman and her doctor and her parents and her friends; why people choose the route of abortion and what the church might do about that. And then I want to talk about the world. You know, outside of the church, what does this have to do with church and state and government and voting and presidents and supreme courts? Does what

the Bible have to say about this topic affect any of that? So we're going to cover the womb, then the woman, and then the world. And I need you to make a deal with me before we start. Here's my deal: I'm going to try to be as fair and as family-friendly as I know how. So parents with little kids, you're not going to have to worry for a single second about some graphic picture that I put on that screen; it's not going to happen. And if you're not so sure what you believe or if the church agrees, you don't have to worry about that either because I'm going to try to be as fair as I can. I have read and researched and interviewed both sides to either extreme and I want to try to represent that in a way that no matter what you think, you would agree, hey, that's what we think and that's what we believe and that's why we believe it. I don't want to set up just some strawman to throw some, you know, easy preacher's pitch and knock it down; I want to be honest about this conversation.

And here's the deal you have to make with me: You have to pay attention and you have to come back. All right? Much like I said during the series *Gay and God*, if you just hear one part of this message, you will never, ever, ever be able to understand all of God's heart. And so even though it's going to cut into your football season and a little bit of your personal time, I need you to be here for the next few weeks so that we can really grasp what our heavenly Father wants for us and for everyone who finds themselves pregnant.

So if you'll make that deal with me, let's start with the womb. You know, something I've noticed in my fairly extensive research is that there's one thing that every single person agrees on. Pro-life people, pro-choice people, republicans, democrats, Christians and atheists, I have not found a single dissenting voice to this statement: People matter. When I try to listen why pro-life or conservative people believe these things, at the base of their argument is the belief that people matter. And if you talk to pro-choice people or those who support abortion – why would you do this or that, why would you support this or that – if you listen carefully, their answer is because people matter. What we all can agree on is that if a person is standing in front of us, that person matters; we care about them with compassion, with sympathy, and with love. And that's why, if you're taking notes, I want to start our conversation here. I think the primary issue on the topic of abortion is personhood. Now, personhood, if you haven't heard that term, is just a fancy, technical term that means when did you become a person? At what point in the process of your development would you be declared as a person? In other words, if we could zoom inside the womb of a pregnant woman, what would we find there? Is it a person or is it just a part of the mother's body? Is it a who with its own identity or is it a what? A clump of organic matter and tissue? Is it an individual who deserves to be protected because it has the rights of any other person? Or is it simply under the jurisdiction and autonomy of the mother who carries it?

If you and I agree that people matter, then the number one question at the top of our list should be this: Is it a person? Now I'm making that claim because I think that you would agree with me – and you can tell me after church if you think I'm wrong about this – that we know exactly what to do with people. Look up on stage for a second and let's imagine that right here, center stage, right in front of my podium, is a little one-year old girl. Can you see her? Little church dress, growing the pigtails out so she kind of looks like Shrek with some little barrettes in there. If you could picture that little girl and we agree that's a little person, you and I would know that

no matter how complex her family, her father, her mother, her genetics, her intelligence, her estimated lifespan, no matter how difficult or heartbreaking that was, I think we would all agree that because she's a person, no one is allowed to hurt her. Like, if that little girl was up here and I told you that her conception was not planned – there was a party, mom and dad had too much to drink, they gave into temptation, and boom, here she is – would it be okay if we ended her life? And I'm guessing you'd say, well, no, that's a person. If I told you that cute little girl had a mother who was deep in the grip of addiction, that mom was not stable, she was not loving, their home wasn't entirely safe, and because of that tragic background, could we end that little girl's life? You'd say, no, we've got to help however we can but no, you couldn't do that; she's still a person. If I told you that her father was abusive, he was a bad man, he had already hurt her and he planned to hurt her again, could we then end her life to spare her suffering? And you'd say, well, we have to take care of this man but, no, we can't hurt this little girl because she's a person. What if that little girl in front of us had Down's Syndrome? Could we end her life then? What if she had major physical health issues and the doctors didn't think she had more than a year to live; could we cut that life short? What if I told you that her birth had totally train-wrecked her parent's lives; that they had planned for college, and then career, and they had to push pause on all of it and some of it might never be resurrected because of that little girl. Because of that, could we end her life? You get what I'm getting at? You and I know that no matter how complex a person's situation, once they are a person, they deserve to be protected and God knows exactly what should happen to people, too.

Let me show you our first passage today from Psalm 82. God said this: “Defend the weak, uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed, rescue the weak and the needy.” God says some people are weak, they're needy, they're small, they're oppressed and so what his people should do is rescue and defend and uphold their cause. So I'm simply trying to make the case that God tells us exactly what to do with people and if you can picture that little one-year old, you would agree. Which brings us back to the big question, right? As we look inside the womb of a pregnant woman, what do we find? Is that a person?

Now as I mentioned before, I have tried to read and study that question as much as I can from all sides and I have found that there are five primary answers to that question. I'm guessing if you would talk to 10 of your best friends, you might hear one, two, three, maybe even all five of these answers. So if your mind is still with me and I have your attention, let's write these down so we can understand how we answer this question of personhood.

The first thing that many people say is that we become people at conception; we become people at conception. And many people believe that, not because they've opened this book and not because they've studied the Scriptures, but because they've studied the science. Did you know that medical textbooks on biology and the study of embryos, did you know that Time Magazine and the Rand McNally's Atlas of the Body, did you know that the Encyclopedia Britannica – not the Bible; but the Britannica – has declared that human life, human people, begin at conception. Let me read you a quote from the Encyclopedia Britannica: “A new individual is created when,” so here's personhood, “a new individual is created when the elements of a potent sperm merge with those of a fertilized egg.” Fertile egg, potent sperm, the moment they merge, the Encyclopedia Britannica says a new individual is created.

Ladies, did you know that in your body, if we took cells from your skin or cells from your tongue or cells from your hair or your heart or your kidneys, do you know what those cells would all have in them? The same DNA; throughout your entire body. Like do you know what happens when sperm meets egg inside of a woman who just becomes pregnant? Take those cells out and what do you find? Something completely different. So unless a woman has two different DNA's, science would say, well then a person was created at conception. You ever met a woman with two different sets of fingerprints? Do you know the fingerprints on those tiny little fingers of the fetus inside of her womb are different than mom's? You would scientifically have to say that unless you know a woman who has two heads, two hearts, four legs, and 20 fingers, that a pregnant woman doesn't just have another part of her body, she has a whole other person inside of her. Some people would say for all those reasons and more, without ever opening a Bible, that human people, life begins at conception.

Which brings us to the second answer. Other people would say that, no, we become people at recognition. Recognition. This is the belief that you don't have to like zoom in to the double-helix of DNA; you just have to look – just look. How many of you have driven down the highways and seen those billboards of those massive children inside of the womb? Most of those billboards don't have a Bible passage and why? Because they're trying to make the argument from recognition. If we filled this church with 300 preschoolers who had never heard of the pro-life or pro-choice debate, didn't even know what abortion was, and we showed them a picture of a kid during the second trimester and we asked, "What is that?" What do you think those preschoolers would say? That's the argument from recognition. This says that you don't have to be a scientist and you don't have to study genetics or embryology; if you just look, it will change you. Listen to that beating heart, count those little fingers, see the little bump on the ultrasound for a nose and you know, deep down, you know what that is. That's not some random part inside a woman; that's a person.

This is actually the argument that changed Abby Johnson's mind. Some of you know this woman and her story. Abby Johnson was the director of a Planned Parenthood clinic. But one day, an especially busy day at her job, a visiting doctor asked Abby for her help. The doctor was using a type of abortion technology that used an ultrasound so he could see as he put his instrument inside of the mother exactly where the instrument was according to the fetus. And as Abby stood there holding the wand that would make the ultrasound work, she looked on the screen and she recognized a person. She saw the little curved spine with the individual vertebrae and as the doctor's instrument went inside the womb, she saw as it got closer, the fetus jumped away from it. And that moment train-wrecked her. Past all the rhetoric and all the points that she had been taught, no one even needed to open a Bible, she just saw it and what she recognized on that screen was not a piece of organic matter; it was a person – that's the argument from recognition.

The third argument, if you're still taking notes, is that some people would say, no, we become people at viability. At viability. Viability is just a fancy word that means you have the ability to live. Like if you were born in that very moment, you could survive outside of your mother's womb. Now obviously, if you think about medicine and technology, what happens in the NICU

changes depending what kind of country you're in and what year we're talking about. As science has advanced in its amazing ability to do amazing things, the number has moved from full-term 40 weeks back to 35, then to 30, then to the late 20s, then to the mid-20s. I believe if my research is correct, the earliest baby ever born to survive was 21 weeks and four or five days. But before that, even in America with all of its advances, at least currently, a child cannot survive. And some people would say, well, that's proof that it's not really a person just yet.

Doctor Willy Parker is one of the authors that I read in my preparation for this message. He's one of the few abortion doctors who works in the American south. And in his book, he kind of clinically describes what abortion is like from his perspective and as he describes it, he makes the same argument. He personally feels it's immoral and evil and wrong to abort a baby at 25 or at 30 or at 35 weeks; that's a child to him. But before it's viable, it isn't. Look on the screen and you can see Dr. Parker's own words. He says, "Before 22 weeks, a fetus is not in any way equal to a 'baby' or a 'child.' Every one of the fetal parts – head, body, limbs – is like a puzzle that has to be put back together. I place them together, recreating the fetus in the pan. I have done this so many times that it has become routine. No matter what those parts may look like, this is organic matter that does not add up to anything that can live on its own." You follow his logic? It doesn't matter what it looks like, at the end of an abortion, if it's before 22 weeks, this is just organic matter. It's not a child, it's not a baby and Dr. Parker, why would you say that? Well, his answer is because it does not add up to anything that can live on its own.

Fourth: Other people believe that we become people at desire. At desire. When a mother desires to be pregnant with a child, then she is. And if she doesn't desire to be pregnant with a child, then it isn't. Part of this philosophy says that every single child in our world should be a wanted child; no one should be born and come into this world not wanted, not loved, not treasured, and not cherished. And therefore, if a woman doesn't desire a baby, she does not have one within her.

This book was one of the more helpful books that I read in my research. It's called "Shout Your Abortion," and it contains, I think, 43 different stories of women who have had abortions and they don't feel guilty about it, they're not ashamed of it, they're glad they did it, they would do it again if they had the chance, and this book honestly really helped me understand all the reasons why a woman would choose abortion. As I was reading, a woman named Amy, she expressed this, the argument from desire. Here's what she said; I'll put her words on the screen. Amy said, "The simple truth is this: If a sperm and an egg come together when a child is," there's that word, "desired, a human being is born. But if a sperm and egg come together when a woman knows in her bones that this is not the right time for her to be a mother, then perhaps what is born in her is her own confident agency over her life." She desires a child? Congratulations, you got one. But if you just know this isn't the right time, this isn't good for any of us, then what exists in you is just your own confidence to set aside what's right and what's wrong for you. That's the argument from desire.

And that brings us to our fifth and final case. Some people would say it's not conception or recognition or viability or desire but rather we become people at birth. So once a child is out, it is absolutely a child; no questions asked. It's not part of the mother, it's not dependent on the



mother; there it is. It's taken its first breath, given its first cry, everyone can see, no questions asked, this is a person. But before that moment comes, even if the birth is only partial, then that's still the mother and she knows deep in her bones what's best for her, what's best for her family, and she can make her own decision.

So those are the top five arguments that I have found for the issue of personhood. Before I grab my Bible and we try to figure out which of those options is biblical, let me just pause and ask you a personal question. And you don't have to answer the question out loud; you can just think of your answer in your head. But what do you think? When it comes to the issue of personhood, what's your position? If it was just me and you and a cup of coffee and I said when do you think you became a person? What would be your answer? And if I pushed you a little bit to defend it, like why do you choose that one instead of those four, or this one instead of the other four, what would be your reasoning for your position? And if I sat you down at a table in the church lobby with people who hold the four other positions, do you think you could make a persuasive case why your position is the Christian one and the other ones are not? And now, a more important question, a massively important question, is there any page of that book that you could open to and defend yourself? Is there any passage, any chapter, any verse in the book that we believe came from God that would prove your position is not just your own feeling or opinion but it is the will and the heart of our Father who is in heaven? Because that's what we need to do next. Surely, any of us can believe anything, whether the argument is good or bad. But for now if you're a follower of Jesus, what should this book teach you? As I mentioned before, in the weeks to come, we'll talk about life out there with government and laws and supreme courts but for now, let's just talk about in here. As people who love Jesus and follow him, as people who sing that God is our Father, Jesus is our Savior, and the Holy Spirit is our truth definer, what should we believe from this book about the question of personhood?

***We'll cover more next week in part two of this message. Find more content about this very important topic at [timeofgrace.org](http://timeofgrace.org).***