



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:** ¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁶ 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 2
Psalm 82:3, Luke 1:41, Psalm 139:13 + 16, Psalm 51:5, 1 John 1:9
June 13, 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.

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?

Well, believe it or not, the Bible itself answers that exact question. Let me show you two passages from the gospel of Luke; passages about jumping John and the baby Jesus. Some of you have heard this story that when Mary, the virgin Mary, became pregnant with Jesus, she traveled south from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea and she found her relative, an older woman named Elizabeth, who was also pregnant; about six months along. And when Mary walked through the door and she said hi to Elizabeth, what was in Elizabeth's womb, the child later to be named John the Baptist, acted like someone just turned on the House of Pain song and he started to jump around, right? Have you seen this passage? Luke 1:41: "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb." Now the guy who wrote that verse was a first century doctor named Luke and he didn't write in English; he wrote in Greek, originally. The Greek word for baby that's used in this verse is the word "brephos." Brephos. Can you say that with me one time? Brephos, right? So what leaped in Elizabeth's womb was a brephos, which doesn't answer our question, right? Well, what does brephos technically mean? Is it just a fetus or is it an actual baby? And if you flip one page in Luke's gospel, you find the answer.

A few months later, Mary travels down to Bethlehem. She makes it to the place where she will give birth to Jesus. She wraps him in swaddling cloths and she lays him in a manger. An angel appears to a bunch of shepherds nearby and the angel says these words: “This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Anyone want to guess what the Greek word for baby is there? Yeah, *brephos*. You see the connection? What was inside Elizabeth’s womb was the same thing that was lying in Bethlehem’s manger. In Dr. Luke’s perspective, there was no difference; it was a *brephos* either way, which proves that the argument that life begins at birth is not biblical.

In addition, unless my understanding of first century medicine is wrong, the argument from viability can’t pass this test either. If Elizabeth had a *brephos* in her womb and she was only six months pregnant, moms, help me out – how many weeks is that? Twenty-seven weeks? First century, middle east, Palestine, do you think any baby could survive being born at 27 weeks? Not a chance. It’s really been maybe the last 50 years that technology has taken off to save premature babies so at 27 weeks, it was still a *brephos* from a biblical perspective, which means the arguments from viability and from birth aren’t biblical.

Which leaves us with three options, right? Conception, recognition and desire. Well, the Bible has something to say about that, as well. Let’s turn our attention to Psalm 139 where King David, a famous ancient poet, spoke these words. He said, “God, you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother’s womb. Your eyes saw my unformed body.” It’s interesting, huh? My unformed body. Before my body was formed, before you could recognize it as a little person, David says “my.” That wasn’t an ‘it’, that wasn’t tissue, that wasn’t a clump of cells, that wasn’t organic matter; that was my body even before it was formed, which means the argument from recognition can’t be biblical. And if you notice from the same passage, who created and knit together his little body in his mother’s womb? It was God. God desired David to be formed in the womb. It wasn’t mom that made me in the womb; it was my dad, my Father, who is in heaven. You see, it is God the Creator’s desire that begins life; it is not when any earthly parent desires it.

And if I could take a really quick tangent with you – I’ve already spoken too long – I think to be honest, this is the issue behind the issue. I think behind many of the questions and objections about abortion is this idea about who gets to decide what is good and moral and right. As I read through all 42 stories in “Shout Your Abortion,” there was a theme actually that came up more than any other theme in the entire book and the theme is no one will tell me what is good except me. No one will tell me what to do except me. There is no government, no parent, no religion, no pastor, no lord, no savior, no god, no king who knows what it is right for me except me. My body. And no one has a right to say a word about it. That is literally the foundation upon which the theory and philosophy of abortion is built.

I’ll prove it to you. A woman from “Shout Your Abortion,” said this: “I deserve to exist as an autonomous entity.” Do you know what autonomous means? Self-rule. I deserve to exist as a person who rules herself. A woman named Chrissy added this: “My belief is in the absolute right to bodily autonomy.” Absolute. My body, my choice. Wendy, a former U.S. Senator said

this: “You, lady, are the only person who can decide what is right for you.” An abortion is built on your desires, your wishes, your wants, and there is no one, not even this one, who can tell you differently. Which is why the argument from desire is so problematic, not just for this, but for everything.

So take out birth, viability, take out recognition and desire, and guess what you have left? Conception, which actually fits perfectly with the biblical position. Let me show you one more passage from King David. In Psalm 51, David said, “Surely I was sinful at birth; sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Quick question: Is this podium sinful? Raise your hand if you think this podium is morally good. Anyone want to vote for moral evil? Another question – this guy standing in front of you, how many of you think he’s sinful? Hands went up rather quickly, there. I think my wife’s hand went up first. Yeah, why didn’t you raise your hand for this? Because it’s a thing, right? It’s an it. And things like screens and podiums and stools aren’t moral; they can’t be sinful. So listen to what David says: “Surely I was sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Which logically implies from the time of his conception he was a person. Not an it, not a thing, not a cell, not organic matter. He was a person that the Bible would label as good or evil, as holy or sinful. So if you’re tracking the logic, our big idea for today is pretty clear and if you’re writing this down, let’s write things down from God’s perspective. The big idea is that God creates people at conception. God creates people at conception.

Now if we could somehow push pause on the clock and you could raise your hands, I bet a lot of you would. Wait, wait, wait, Pastor. But what are you saying about cases of rape and of incest? Now what are you saying about how we should vote in an election? And what about people whose mothers get pregnant but they’re addicted and unstable? And what if the father is abusive and how can the church say life begins at conception but not care about other life? How can they judge teenage moms for keeping a baby if they do the right thing? And what about all the causes that lead people – the poverty and the busyness and the craziness and the dysfunctional families and climate – what about all those things? And honestly, great questions, the right questions, which is why we made a deal, right? And in the next couple of weeks, I’m going to try to answer all of those questions and more. But today, I just want you to sit with this truth that God, the one who knows all truth, has said that human life, your life, my life, every life, begins at conception.

Now I should say “amen” right now. I can see the time; I’m way over. But there’s one final thing I need to say. And it’s what she told me that I need to say. This past week, I got I think the longest email I’ve gotten in years. And it was from a woman who gave me permission, anonymously, to tell you that she had an abortion. She was pregnant many years ago, she didn’t plan to be, but you know, she came around to the idea that maybe she could have this baby and raise this child. And so she told her mother that she was pregnant. Her mother, who she described as the most God-fearing woman that she had met in her entire life, and do you know what the mother said? “Get rid of it.” And so this confused and distraught woman went to her sisters. “This is what mom told me to do but I couldn’t do that. This is life. God says I can’t do that. That would be wrong.” And do you know what the sister said? “That’s not life. Life begins at birth. Doesn’t it say in the Bible that when God breathed into Adam, he became a

living being? So until the baby takes its first breath, it's not a living being; it's just cells. You need to listen to mom and take care of it." And then she realized that if she carried this baby, she wouldn't have the support of the people that she needed the most. She reluctantly got in the car and went to the clinic and had an abortion.

And it wasn't just that day or that week as she recovered from the procedure; it wasn't just that month or that year. But she said for 26 straight years of sitting in church, she could never forgive herself. She knew, she would not be deceived, that there was life in her from the time of conception; a life that she had just ended. And for 26 years, she felt that the good news of Jesus was not for her.

And I wonder right now if some of you are feeling that way? Maybe some of you, for the first time in your entire life, realized what God saw that day. Maybe it was decades ago, maybe it was a year ago, maybe it was just this week that you chose the path of abortion. Or maybe you were the guy who just wasn't there and it forced her emotionally into a corner and she chose abortion. Maybe you drove her to the clinic, maybe you paid for it, maybe you prayed for it, maybe you encouraged it, maybe you weren't ready and so you pushed it. Maybe you're the parents who are embarrassed. You knew that your reputation of being this great Christian family was about to be damaged. Maybe you knew the guy was wrong and that the timing was wrong and so you didn't say anything or maybe you said something. Or maybe right now some of you are realizing what you have supported verbally and on social media; that you have thought it was a human right and a good idea for some to end life that God created. Maybe you've been proud of a movement that has now ended 60 million infant lives in the last 50 years. Maybe some of you who believe that you're a pretty good person, better than average, maybe in your own heart you're putting together the pieces that you've murdered.

And if you're thinking that, you're right. We protest and riot when we see one person's life unjustly taken and yet some of us have clapped and applauded while tens of millions of lives have been unjustly taken. And friends, God the Creator who knits – who knits – every person together in their mother's womb, he does not think this is a joke or a social movement or debatable. He loves people and he hates abortion and that's why he sent Jesus. Do you know one of the craziest things about this book? Did you know that the three men that wrote the biggest chunks of this book had something in common? And that something is that they all ended human life. King David, of the Old Testament, the guy who wrote, what, 75 psalms? Do you know what he did? He ended a person's life. Moses, the guy on the mountain with the Ten Commandments, wrote the first five books of this Bible, do you remember what he did? He ended a person's life. The guy who wrote half the New Testament, Paul, who used to be known as Saul, when Jesus confronted him and called him to faith, before he was baptized, do you know what he did? He ended lots of people's lives and yet, Jesus Christ himself was born from the family line of David. He appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Elijah and Moses, a man who had taken life, at his side. And after he had rose from the dead for the forgiveness of sins, he appeared to a man like Saul. Why do you think God would have done that? Why would he have handpicked three men like that to write this book? Because he wanted you and he wanted me to know that it's not too late; that for the worst things we have done, the things we most deeply regret, it's not too late.

There's one last passage I want to share with you today from 1 John. It says this: "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and God is just and God will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Is abortion wrong? Yes. Is it unrighteous? Yes. And guess what Jesus did? He was so faithful that the little brephos born in Bethlehem, he developed and matured as a man and he thought of you when he went to the cross. And he looked up and he prayed moments before he died: "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." And he literally forgave the people who were about to take his life. And friends, he does the same thing today. Run to Jesus. Confess to Jesus. He is so faithful and he will not just give you a second chance – I love this – he will purify you from all unrighteousness. Pure, clean, holy. That is what you will be; like Paul and David and Moses. You may have committed their sin but, friends, you can have their Savior. Call on the name of Jesus today and you will be saved.

That's what she wanted me to tell you. That woman who emailed me with 26 years of guilt, she has come to know and believe in the power of Jesus and she concluded that marathon email with these amazing words. She said, "I'm sharing my story in case some of you, my sisters, or my brothers in Christ, sitting there in church are hoping that no one will discover your past. I'm sharing my story to let you know that you don't have to suffer in silence anymore because there is no condemnation in Jesus now. The forgiveness of Jesus is for you. The water of your baptism washes you clean. Christ suffering on the cross was to redeem you. He paid for it all. So confess your sins to one another," she said, "and you can be healed."

Friends, there is life in the womb and there's eternal life in the One.

Let's pray.

Father in Heaven, no one is like you. No one is so radically committed to what is true and what is right and what is just as you. We sometimes get used to things just because they're legal and we mess that up and think they're moral. But you see the truth and you're not budging and we thank you for that, God. It means that as times change and as cultures change, you will never change and we will never have to worry that your scale will shift and the target will move. Thank you, God, for being a God of truth and of justice; a God who loves every life because that assures us that you love us and our lives.

Thank you, God, that you don't pick and choose. It doesn't matter who our parents were, it doesn't matter our IQ, our genetics, our physical ability, our level of poverty, you don't care, God. You just love us and we love you for that. And God, I thank you even more for your grace. I thank you that in our church are gossips and slanderers, murderers and adulterers, people who have been abused, people who have made choices they deeply regret. I thank you, God, that even though we worry, even though we're anxious, even though we don't always stand up for what's right, that you don't give up on us. And instead, day after day and week after week, you lead us back to the cross of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the whole world.

I pray right now, God, that you would send your Holy Spirit to smash any stubborn heart that is here today. Whoever wants to object and spout out lies about reproductive justice and a woman's right, God, rip that lie out of their heart before it kills another child that you love. And Father, if there's anyone here who thinks that they're too far gone, that their sorrow is too great, that they won't be welcomed here, they won't be welcomed into eternal life, fix their eyes on your son, Jesus, in whom there is salvation and forgiveness for everyone and everything.

I thank you for this moment, God. It matters. And I pray that this message and your word would never be in vain. I pray it all with confidence, God. I've never encouraged an abortion but have done things just as bad so for your mercy upon me, upon us, we thank you and praise you and we ask it all in Jesus' name, Amen.