



TIME OF GRACE®

Abortion: What Does God Say? Abortion and the Church

Study Notes

Summary

God loves life. Throughout the Bible, God has much to say about the lives of people who are outside of the womb. Poor lives. Struggling lives. Trapped lives. Scared lives. What would it look like if God's people felt the same way as their Father in heaven and deeply cared about each life? How might the abortion discussion change if every Christians was pro (every) life?

- Big Idea: Be Pro (_____) Life!
- **Acts 4:33-35:** ³³ And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.
- The church meets (_____) needs.
- **Romans 5:20:** But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.
- The church meets (_____) needs.
- **James 1:27:** Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
- The church meets (_____) needs.
- **Galatians 6:10:** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.
- **Romans 10:11:** As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."

Points to Ponder

1. Why is it common, even among Christians, to care more about the baby in the womb than about the other lives involved in an unplanned pregnancy?
2. Imagine if you yourself were pregnant and didn't plan it (or you had gotten a woman pregnant without planning it). What would be your top three needs? How might a local church that truly cared about you help you meet those needs?
3. Meditate on 2 Corinthians 5:14,15. How does the gospel of Jesus' love for us affect the way we treat our neighbors, including those who are facing an unplanned pregnancy?

Homework for Next Week

Read 1 Peter 2:13,14.

Time of Grace Ministry
Abortion: What Does God Say? Abortion and the Church
Acts 4:33, Romans 5:20, James 1:27, Galatians 6:10, Romans 10:11
June 20, 2021

Pastor Mike Novotny

Imagine if your own experience growing up was not so beautiful. But your experience, when a pregnancy isn't wanted, is that it can be a traumatic one for a child, something that you would never, ever, ever wish upon another human being. Imagine.

If you don't know much about my family, my wife Kim and I have two girls, ages 12 and 11; they're amazing, they're beautiful, like I cherish and love them but can I tell you something about those kids? They were a boatload of work. You parents, can you agree with this? When I think about life BC., before children, I ask myself like what did I do with all that time? With all that money, my goodness, I should be a millionaire by now because my kids have been so expensive and so exhausting and so wonderful but did I say exhausting? Like, it's so much work to have kids! And here's what I want you to know about that story: I had everything in my favor. Both times when Kim got pregnant, we had everything in our favor. I mean, those pregnancies weren't an accident; we wanted kids, we were praying to God to have kids, we were trying to have kids. And when we finally found out that Kim was pregnant, we weren't like a one-night stand or an on-again, off-again, or a brand-new relationship; we were four years into marriage. After the I do's, not a perfect relationship, but one with love and respect and seeking God together. Mental health struggles just weren't at all a part of our story; I wasn't dealing with depression and neither was she. We were both, you know, pretty strong; feeling pretty good about life and optimistic about the future. There was no abuse in our family; not verbal, not physical, not sexual, not emotional between us or that had been committed to us. We felt good and safe about the world that we came into. I mean, the deck was stacked – financially, relationally, spiritually, emotionally. I mean, we were far from a perfect family but if you were going to be conceived, our family was a safe one and a good one to be in.

So if raising kids is exhausting and expensive and one of the hardest things a person will ever do, imagine – imagine if the situation isn't that easy. Imagine if your own experience growing up was not so beautiful. But your experience, when a pregnancy isn't wanted, is that it can be a traumatic one for a child; something that you would never, ever, ever wish upon another human being. Imagine.

And that's why I'm really glad that you're here today because today, I want to talk to you about what followers of Jesus can do about that; about all the reasons why. I mean, we can't make anyone make the right choice but we can make abortion a much harder choice to make. We can make life a much more optimistic and easier path to take. As people who love Jesus and realize that he gave up everything to give us life, God calls us to give up anything and everything so that others can have life, too. So the big idea I want to share with you today, if you're taking notes, is this: God wants you, I want you, the Bible encourages you to be pro every life. Does that little life in the womb matter? From the moment that God makes it! Does the life of the woman who

carries that baby matter, too? Absolutely. Does the life of the guy who finds himself a new father matter? Absolutely. Do the lives of stable, functional families matter? Yes. And do the lives of broken, dysfunctional families matter? Yes. Today, God is calling us not just to think about the womb but to think about the woman and to step up as his people and to do everything we can so that every life is loved.

So to get us started, I want to share with you an amazing passage from the book of Acts. Listen to these words from Acts 4: “And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For, from time to time, those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales, and put it at the apostles’ feet and it was distributed to anyone who had need.” Did you catch it? God’s grace was so powerfully at work in their hearts, they were so amazed at what Jesus had done for them, giving them eternal life at the cross as a free, generous gift, that if they had to sell land or houses, it was done, so there’d be no needy people among them.

So that passage, obviously, isn’t about abortion but I think that same attitude might be one of the best cures to abortion. In a country where one in four women choose it, where just under a million abortions happen in America each year, what can you and I do to meet those needs that lead people to choose abortion? Today, I want to talk to you about three needs that God is calling you and me to meet. So if you’re taking notes, here’s the first one. God calls us, first of all, to meet spiritual needs. When we hear about abortion in the headlines, we often hear of the most heartbreaking stories on the spectrum. You know, it was a case of assault or of rape or of incest and now she’s pregnant. Those are indeed heartbreaking situations but did you know Planned Parenthood says that less than one-half of one percent of abortions happen for such tragic reasons? Instead, according to their own surveys, do you know what the number one and number three reason a woman gets an abortion is? Convenience. It’s not mental illness, it’s not poverty, it’s not abuse, it’s not her own addiction. It’s convenience.

And friends, if that’s the number one and number three reason that hundreds of thousands of abortions happen just in America every year, then what a lot of us need is truth. Because the truth is, we are not allowed to end life just because it’s an inconvenience. If someone finds you inconvenient and difficult, they’re not allowed to hurt you, much less end your life. And so, what we have to say to one another, is yeah, that might work there, it might feel very empowering. Recently, at a Hollywood award show, a woman, a great actress, she thanked the crowd for winning this award and she said, “If I wouldn’t have gotten that abortion, I wouldn’t be here. I couldn’t be a great actress who devotes this much time to my craft and raise a child; that would have been inconvenient.” But come on. So we have to say it to people: You can’t. You must not. Or, to quote the commandment, “You shall not.”

Or maybe a woman’s spiritual need is not truth; maybe it’s love. Maybe she knows with her pregnancy that she messed up, maybe she is as sorry as sorry can be. But maybe she’s scared and what she needs is love. A woman from our church texted me this morning and she said, “When I was 16 and I felt so alone and I walked into the clinic and the only Christian people I hear are those who are screaming at me that I’m a horrible person. I wonder if there had been just one Christian that knew and that loved.”

A couple months ago, I met this guy who did that very thing. I was at a Christian conference and I saw the guy working this little booth for a pro-life ministry and he told me about the life that he loved. He and his wife, I forget how, had met this young woman who was in an abusive relationship. And so to help keep her safe, they opened the doors of their home and they let her stay with them. And she did and it was great and their light was shining and they were sharing Jesus with her. But the girl liked to go out a lot; she liked to have a good time and she liked to party and she crossed sexual lines and one day, guess what, she got pregnant. Now she had grown up with a really strict religious father who knew all about the truth but not very much about grace and love. And so one day, softly, she dragged her feet down the stairs, showed up in the kitchen at breakfast, and quietly announced, "I should probably leave." The wife stopped making breakfast, she turned and ask, "What? Why would you leave?" And the woman confessed, "I'm pregnant." And this Christian woman, she put down the kitchen supplies, she ran across the kitchen, and she loved her. She wrapped her arms around her. The husband, so unlike the girl's father, he bounced up and he joined in the embrace. And when she looked at them, confused, tears in her eyes, he said, "Honey, forgiveness is what we do here."

I love that story. She kept the baby and that family loved her and the new life she brought into the world. It makes me think of the apostle Paul's words in Romans 5. He said, "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more." Do any pregnancies happen because of sin, sexual sin? Do you feel like that's too big of an obstacle? Nope, because Jesus is up here. And when Jesus' people repeat this, that there is forgiveness at the cross, there is love at the cross, you are cleansed and beautiful and pure at the cross, we meet people's greatest need; not just for truth but for truth and love. So friends, when you see someone who's scared and they don't know where to go and the world out there is telling them to choose convenience, let's make sure when they walk through these doors they find something so much better; they find Christ. They find grace.

So that's the first need. Grab your pens because here's the second. The second thing that we as the church can do is to meet financial needs. According to a 2004 survey by Planned Parenthood, 23 percent of abortions happen for financial reasons. If there are more or less a million abortions in America, and if my math is right, that's 230,000 abortions happen because a woman or a couple feel like they can't afford a baby. And I get that reason because babies ain't cheap. Any of you new parents, you get that? You have the baby – hey, this is great! – and then the medical bill comes and you gulp and swallow hard and then you pay it and then the next medical bill comes and you stretch hard to pay it and then the other medical bills come and you think what happened? I was only there for two or three days. And then there's the diapers and the formula and then after that there's the diapers and after that the diapers – have you ever paid for diapers before? I mean, it's crazy. Some people estimate that from birth to age 18, it will cost the average family a quarter million dollars to pay for their kid. You know, the Bible says the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil but I think the lack of money is the root of all kinds of reasons; reasons why someone might be so afraid that they can't adequately provide for a kid, for themselves, for their other children, that they would choose maybe even something that they know is not right.

And that's where you come in. Remember those crazy Christians who knew about the grace of God? "I've got a house!" "I can sell some land!" Do you think you and I could do the same thing? And I love the thought; it's a crazy thought but I wonder if some of you here today are about to do something crazy like "I can't believe I'm doing this," crazy. Some of you will sell

stocks after this message. Some of you will sell property. Some of you will call a real estate agent and think about downgrading your home. Some of you will tell the company you were going to retire but you're going to stick it out another year. Some of you are going to sell your car and live with something that barely gets by because you're about to do the most beautiful thing in the world and save a life. Twenty-three percent; we can change that. That's religion. Jesus' brother James put it this way. He said, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: To look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

Have you ever heard about what the Romans used to do to babies? You know, we often think, at least in our culture, that once a child is born, it's obviously a person and it's valuable and it should be protected but back in the first century, the Romans did not view children that way. After a child was born, a few days later the infant would be laid on the ground at the feet of its father and in that moment, the father would decide if it was a person or not. If he would stoop down and pick it up, then it would become life; valued life that would be protected. But if he wouldn't, if the baby was inconvenient, if it wasn't the gender that he wanted, if it was too expensive, if it was disfigured or had physical issues, he would stand upright and the baby would be exposed. Exposure was the fancy term the Romans used; they would just take a baby and leave it down in the wilderness or by the river where it would starve or freeze, be eaten by animals, or be picked up by someone who would prostitute or sex traffic the kid. That was Roman culture; it's what they did. They didn't value every life.

But you know who turned the system upside down? The Christians. The Christians believed that when they were dead and helpless, God picked them up. That our heavenly Father sent his son, Jesus, down into the world not because we were so beautiful and strong but because we had great spiritual need. Christians believe what the Bible said; that God adopted us into his family. We weren't born that way but he made us his children through the blood of Jesus Christ. And because Christians believe that, they started picking up kids that weren't their own. Christian families would just see a random baby and they'd pick it up and they'd bring it home and they'd love it and treat it as one of their own. In fact, very soon, after the days of Jesus, Christians became famous for their love of children. And the Romans started to know: If you don't love life, I know someone who does. Leave the baby at the doorstep of the church; those people love life. They love every life.

And it might sound crazy but we could do that again. We could be the kind of people in a world that thinks we're nuts for believing some 2,000-year-old book. We could be the kind of people who think we're crazy for like needing Jesus to get to heaven. We could be the kind of people who this city looks at and says, "I know someone who loves people. I know this guy who goes to that church who sold his boat, not for a better boat, but for a baby." "I know some people that used to live next door and then they moved into a poorer part of town to help single moms. Who does that?" And what would happen if the world, this country, would start to say Christians aren't just those people with the signs; they're the people who would sell everything to love life.

Which brings us to our final need for today. Christians meet spiritual needs; we meet financial needs. Here's the last thing I want you to write down: Christians also meet relational needs. Relational needs. Like you moms out there, when your niece or your friend find out she's pregnant, she has no clue how to be a mother, she was on this path and a baby's about to take her

down a different path and she's so scared that she can't do it, you could meet that need. You could teach her about motherhood. You could tell her the right books to read. You could share your own story and experience; you could meet that need. Or guys, when your buddy from the fantasy football league finds out his girlfriend's pregnant and you're having a beer and he's shocked and floored and has no clue what to do, you and I can meet that need. We can tell him what the world will never, ever tell him. We can tell him what men do; we step up and we serve. We put down our Xbox controllers and we pick up the diaper and the wipes and we serve in Jesus' name. We can tell him that a real man is not a guy who drives a fast car and owns his own business; a real man is someone who sacrifices and serves so that people feel safe and loved. We can show him how to do it, we can teach him how to do it, we can meet relational needs.

If she doesn't have a lot of support from her family, we can be that family. We'll babysit. We'll mentor. The father might not be a good man but there's a lot of good men at our church and we'll make sure that baby is cared for and treasured, known and loved. We can adopt. We can foster. We can do so many things to help so many people.

I love how Galatians 6 puts it. The apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people and especially to those who belong to the family of believers." And that's what I want to put on your heart today; let's do good. We have incredible opportunity to do good, to everyone, but especially to the family of believers. In Jesus' name, let's do it.

You see, many of you, perhaps most of you, maybe all of you, know the grace of Jesus. That he came into this world to do the craziest thing; to love and save you. To give you life with God that endures and lasts forever. Some of you know that Jesus saw all the reasons why you did what you did, like the kind of understandable reasons why you said that or did that or sinned in that way and then, well, all the other reasons that didn't make sense at all. He saw all of it but he did not abort his mission to save you. Instead, he loved your life. He didn't sell land or a house; he left behind his home in heaven and he gave up everything that he had. Jesus went to the cross, he died, he died! He gave up his one and only life so that you would be adopted into the family of a perfect Father. Look at Romans 10. The apostle Paul says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." Like, if you believe in him, in Jesus, you'll never be put to shame. God doesn't turn his face away or judge you; instead he runs toward you to welcome you. And if you know that, if you believe that, then giving up something, a lot of things, giving up everything for their sake feels so small because you know that Jesus gave up everything for your sake.

So brothers and sisters, let's love life. I know in your hearts is a deep desire to give to big things that matter in big ways and nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing matters more than that.

Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you for being you. I can't imagine my spiritual life if you weren't so generous and your grace wasn't so freely given. Thank you. I haven't had an abortion, I never pushed Kim to get an abortion, but God, I've done some messed up stuff that doesn't make any sense to me but to know that I don't have to be ashamed, I don't have to fear your wrath, I know that your face is shining on me, that you love me in this moment, that is so amazingly good! I love you for that and we love you for that.

Thank you, God, for your grace. I'm asking now that it would work so powerfully in our hearts that before the moment passes, before we forget this message, before our Mondays begin and our weeks go on, before the marketers tell us a thousand other things we should do or buy, that we would remember life. And we would give so generously and so crazily that this world is just shocked and we can tell them that the reason we give is because we know the one who gave up everything for us.

God, we can't stop every abortion but we can try. So God, open our eyes to see those who are in need and let our love be a great blessing to their life. I pray all these things, God, in hopeful expectation, knowing that you do great things through your people and ask it all in Jesus' name, Amen.