

# A Sane Look at Abortion

by Mark Mitchell

What do you think is the purpose of the church? There are many in our day whose first response would be that the church's highest purpose is to make us feel better; to lift our spirits and encourage us and to give us hope. The thinking is that they should always go away from church feeling more cheerful and more positive, but while the Scripture doesn't argue against that, it presents another purpose for the church which may make it impossible for the person to always walk away feeling good, and that's the church's call to defend and promote the truth. This is something that has been somewhat lost in our present day. But in the years gone by, promoting the truth has been a place the church has had great impact on society.

There was the strong, inflammatory preaching of pastors in England that began to bring about a public conscience and resulted in the establishment of child labor laws during the industrial revolution. It was the church that began that movement in morality, that movement of conscience. Another example is that it was largely the consistent biblical teaching and preaching of the equal rights of all humanity which was responsible for the erosion and eventual abolishment of slavery in this country. There were certainly some pulpits and churches in the north that were defending and trying to rationalize slavery from biblical grounds, but the abolitionist movement mainly started among God's people. Those were God's people standing for justice in society.

Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:15 that the church is to be "the pillar and support of the truth." That is a very powerful statement with serious implications. The truth and the role it plays in society is supported and founded upon the pillar of the church. That's what we're to do in our society. We're responsible to promote and defend the truth and right and wrong. And where the church doesn't do that, the truth may be there, but it will begin to crumble, and it will begin to be drowned out over time.

With this in mind, the elders believe we must address the very important but very controversial subject of abortion. We understand that in our church there exists every position on the spectrum and those positions are held with deep emotion and sincerity. And we also know that there are some who think that such a controversial issue should not be brought

up in church. But the elders of this church believe very strongly that this is exactly where it should be brought up and it's exactly within the church's jurisdiction, according to Scripture, to address this issue, even if it is controversial.

In addressing this issue, we realize there are likely many women in our midst who have had abortions. If, for whatever reason, you had an abortion, we want you to know that Jesus Christ died for you and loves you very much. How easy it would be in all the discussions of right and wrong and death, and even murder, to overlook the burden and the open wounds and broken hearts of those who have walked through this terrible thing. If you had an abortion, we just want you to know from the outset that Jesus loves you and that forgiveness can reach to you if you trust him to cleanse you.

Let's start by answering a few questions so we know what we are dealing with:

**How prevalent is abortion?** Since the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, over 40 million abortions have occurred in the United States alone. In fact, in the next ten minutes, about as long as it will take you to read this paper, 30 babies will have been aborted. An abortion is performed in the United States every 20 seconds. More children have been killed through abortions than all the soldiers killed in all the wars America has ever been involved in.

**When are children aborted?**

- 50% of abortions occur at 8 weeks
- 25% occur at 9 or 10 weeks
- 5% at 13 to 15 weeks
- 4% at 16 to 20 weeks
- 2% after 20 weeks

There are nearly 200,000 second and third trimester abortions performed every year in America. 17,000 of those occur after 5 months of pregnancy. By the way, unborn children have detectable heartbeats at 18 days after conception, and they have detectable brain wave activity 40 days after conception.

**Why are abortions performed?** According to Planned Parenthood, only 3% involve questions of the mother's health. Another 3% involve questions of the baby's health and less than 1% involve cases of rape or incest. Nearly half of all women obtaining abortions admit to not using any method

of birth control the month they became pregnant. It's come to the place where, more often than not, abortion is little more than a convenient method of contraception.

How tragic it is that we've bought into a whole way of thinking designed to justify what is, in fact, a very serious breach of morality in the eyes of God. We need to stop and take another look. We need to subject our thoughts and opinions to the teaching of Scripture. We cannot afford to be wrong. The stakes are too high.

**What is it that the Scripture says about this issue of abortion?** How wonderful it would be if we could turn to one chapter and verse and have it say to us, "Thou shalt not have abortions." But the Bible doesn't explicitly forbid abortion. Before we leap to the conclusion that therefore it's justified because it's not specifically forbidden, we must say that there are many things which are wrong which are not specifically mentioned in the Scripture. Professor Harold O. J. Brown, writes on this issue: "The Bible does not specifically deal with abortion. For that matter, it does not specifically deal with infanticide, the killing of babies. Nor does it talk about... the killing of one's wife, nor genocide, the killing of a whole race. Examples of such crimes are mentioned but not singled out for special treatment. In fact the Bible does not even discuss suicide. There are specific provisions against homicide, the deliberate taking of human life. The Bible prohibits the taking of innocent human life. If the developing fetus is shown to be a human being, then we do not need a specific commandment against abortion, any more than we need a specific commandment against killing of one's wife. The general commandment against killing covers both."

To understand what the Scripture teaches about abortion we must look at God's relationship to the fetus. If God relates in a personal way to the fetus as a human creature, then there's no doubt what the Scripture says about abortion. And it's abundantly evident from Scripture that God relates to us and is personally involved with us before our birth. Scripture consistently shows God relating to the fetus in a number of very intimate ways. There are three assertions from Scripture about God and the fetus:

**First, God oversees the development of the fetus.** The definitive passage which demonstrates God's intimate involvement with the unborn child is Psalm 139. This is without a doubt the most explicit treatment of God's dealing intimately with the unborn child. In Psalm 139:13, David speaks to God in prayer:

*"For thou, God, didst form my inward parts. Thou didst*

*weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks for Thee for I am fearfully, wonderfully made. Wonderful are thy works. And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee when I was made in secret and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance and in Thy book they were all written the days that were ordained for me when as yet there was not one of them."*

David says that when he was in his mother's womb, God formed his little body. He says in the secret place that no one can see, in the womb, God knit together his bones. Isn't that a great picture of intimacy? God worked and took that unformed person and began to give strength to the bones, began to form the skeleton and the spinal cord. God uniquely and actively worked to put together his frame in the womb.

The second assertion we can make from Scripture regarding God's relationship to the fetus is this: **God begins preparing individuals for specific callings while they're still in the womb. We see this throughout Scripture.** Once again, consider Psalm 139,

*"Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance and in Thy book they were all written the days that were ordained for me when as yet there was not one of them." David says, "While I was still in the womb, You looked on my unformed substance and You ordained each and every one of the days I would live as a human."*

Think of that. God is not only forming and shaping the physical development of the fetus, but God is ordaining each and every day that person will live while they are still in the womb. God is intimately concerned with the life of a person in the womb.

Scripture undeniably shows God intimately involved, not only in the physical shaping, but in the ordaining of the life of the child. Romans 9:11 says that Jacob and Esau were in the womb together and while they were still in the womb, before they'd done anything good or bad, God gave Jacob preeminence over Esau. God called Jacob to a certain life and relationship and Esau to another one when they were still in the womb. In Jeremiah 1:4-5 God says to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. Before you were born I consecrated you. I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." God says, "When you were just a gleam in your daddy's eye, I knew you. Before you were even born, I dedicated you. I set you apart for a purpose before you'd seen one day outside of your mother's body."

How could this be if the fetus is not a viable human being until after birth? The kind of thinking that tries to measure a human being by its ability to function or contribute to society is completely non-biblical thinking. That amounts to little more than the clever rationalization of a society looking for a way to justify what it wants, namely the freedom to end the life of an unborn child without responsibility, without consequence before God.

Here's the third assertion about God's relationship to the fetus: **Scripture demonstrates continuity between prenatal and postnatal life.** What happens in the fetus is continued on until afterwards. There's no interruption. A great example comes from the nativity narratives. Do you remember when Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit? She was carrying in her body the Messiah. Unknown to her, her cousin Elizabeth conceived and she was carrying the one who was going to be the forerunner of the Messiah. God told her to go see her cousin Elizabeth. It says that when Mary walked into the presence of Elizabeth that the baby within the womb of Elizabeth leaped for joy. Why? Because the Son of God was in the womb of the other woman in the room. Tumors do not leap for joy. Blobs of tissue don't do back-flips in the presence of God. It doesn't happen. This proves that Jesus was the Son of God even in his prenatal life! This continuity between prenatal and postnatal life is the same for all of us.

What a contrast this is to the pro-abortionist dismissal of the unborn as non-persons with questionable value. One man wrote, "All these texts indicate that God's special dealings with human beings can long proceed their awareness of a personal relationship with God. God deals with human beings in an intensely personal way. Long before society is accustomed to treating them as personal in the whole sense, God's actions present a striking contrast to the current notions of personhood."

Abortion is a denial that God is involved in the developmental process. Abortion is a denial that life is a blessing and God's gift. Abortion is a denial that God cares for the unborn. Abortion is a denial that God has a purpose for the unborn. Abortion is a denial that the unborn child is a person, whether or not the mother-to-be planned to carry a child. And in the case of Jesus' mother, Mary never planned to be pregnant like that. Whether she planned it or not, she's carrying within her a life that has as much right to live before birth as every child does after birth. So as opposed to that position Scripture says the fetus is a person. The unborn child is equal with the mother and the quality of personhood is imparted to a child at conception.

And yet how confusing our thinking gets in all of this. The pro-abortionists have done a very clever thing in tying this issue to a woman's so-called right of choice. We live in a generation that is hypersensitive to a person's rights. We were raised during the Civil Rights Movement. We've come to believe in the rights of women in this generation based on truth of equality and justice. We're a people that are hypersensitive to somebody's rights. But, there are times and situations in which an individual's rights do not reign supreme over any other consideration. There may come a time in which my right to choose is forfeited because of some other higher value. The truth is, when a woman is pregnant, whether she likes it or not, the choice has already been made. We are not dealing here with the cases of rape and incest because according to Planned Parenthood, those cases are less than 2% involved. Let's not use those 1 or 2% to justify the 98% that's just an issue of lifestyle freedom. If a man and a woman don't want to have a child, they shouldn't do the things that men and women do to have babies. That's the choice that's already been made.

Sometimes we think we are doing society, or even the unborn child, a favor by aborting that child. But, who do we think we are to judge the value of the potential life of a child in the womb? We cannot possibly see from our vantage point what God plans to do with that child. God has this thing about people from what we would consider terrible backgrounds. God loves to use barren women and children born out of wedlock. God loves to take women who have been prostitutes and cleanse and change them and use them to carry his name into settings that no one else could ever come into. God loves to do that. We simply cannot make that kind of choice. We don't have the right. We don't have the vantage point.

We can conclude by making three statements about what we need to do in response to this issue:

**First, be Biblical.** Determine where you stand. You must deal with the text of Scripture. Have you genuinely dealt with and dialogued with the Biblical arguments in coming to your position? For those who already understand and are committed to abortion not being right before God, you also need to be Biblical.

Even if your thinking is Biblical, your attitude and response to other people can be anti-Biblical. You can be right in your thinking and dead wrong in your attitude, like those sick, misguided people who claim to be Christians, who celebrate the death of a doctor who performs abortions. That does not help the cause of Christ. That is completely anti-Biblical. That

is not how Jesus would treat that. If you're a person who thinks that those who believe in abortion are our enemy, you are completely wrong. They're the victims of our enemy. They're not our enemy. The Lord would never justify us having a judgmental, critical, persecuting spirit. That's not how the Lord would act. So you may be Biblical in your thinking and proud of it, but are you Biblical in your attitude and response?

**Second, be tolerant.** We must leave room for others' convictions. Don't ever reject another brother or sister in Christ because they think differently than you on this issue. They may love the Lord just as much as you do. They can be a part of CPC. If Jesus is the issue and they're submitted to Him, they're welcome here because God's going to be working in their lives. If you are one of those people who

think differently than we do on this issue, you too must work at being tolerant of those who disagree.

**Third, be active.** Each one of us must decide how to respond. This is not just a political issue. It's a moral issue and it calls for a personal response and there's many ways to act. Certainly the first is to pray. Pray for our country. Pray for the people in your life that you know are battling this issue. Pray for our teenagers caught in these decisions. Be a promoter of truth and grace in your relationships. Don't dodge difficult discussions. Be an encourager of good thinking and Biblical thinking. Get involved and become a volunteer. One of the finest ministries is the Crisis Pregnancy Center of San Mateo County. There may be other ways that you can find to respond but this is an issue that requires we respond with action.