

It Is Easier to Remove a Fetus Than to Kill a Baby

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By James Dobson

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo.—From time to time, people ask me for my thoughts about abortion. At this time I want to share some of those thoughts with you.

Question: Dr. Dobson, would you express your opinion on the matter of abortion on demand? How do you see the moral issues involved, especially from a Christian perspective?

Answer: I have considered the abortion issue from every vantage point and now I find myself absolutely and unequivocally opposed to "abortion on demand." There were many considerations that led to this position, including the impact of abortions on our perception of human life.

It is interesting to note, for example, that a woman who plans to terminate her pregnancy usually refers to the life within her as "the fetus." But, if she intends to deliver and love and care for the little child, she affectionately calls him "my baby."

The need for this distinction is obvious: If we are going to kill a human being without experiencing guilt, we must first strip it of worth and dignity. We must give it a clinical name that denies its personhood.

That has been so effectively accomplished in our society that an unborn child during his first six months in gestation can now be sacrificed with no sense of loss on anyone's part.

There would be a far greater public outcry if we were destroying puppies or kittens than there is for the nearly million abortions that occur in America each year.

Psychiatrist Thomas Szasz reflects the casualness with which we have accepted these deaths by writing, "[Abortions] should be available in the same way as, say, an operation for beautification of the nose."

I agree with Francis Schaeffer that the changing legal attitudes toward abortions carry major implications for human life at all levels. If the rights of an unborn child can be sacrificed by reinterpretation by the Supreme Court, why could not other unnecessary people be legislated out of existence?

For example, the expense and inconvenience of caring for the severely retarded could easily lead to the same social justification that has encouraged us to kill the unborn (i.e., they will be an expensive nuisance if permitted to live).

And how about getting rid of the very old members of our population who contribute nothing to society?

And why should we allow deformed infants to live, etc.?

Perhaps the reader feels those chilling possibilities would never materialize, but I'm not so sure. We already live in a society where some patients will kill an unborn child if they determine through amniocentesis that its sex is not the one they desired.

There are many other aspects of the abortion issue that underscore its inherent evil, but the most important evidence for me comes from the Scripture. Of course, the Bible does not address itself directly to the practice of abortions.

However, I was amazed to observe how many references are made in both the Old and New Testaments to God's personal acquaintance with children prior to birth. Not only is He aware of their gestations, but He is specifically knowledgeable of them as unique individuals and personalities.

Consider the following examples.

1. The angel Gabriel said of John the Baptist, "and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15, KJV).

2. The prophet Jeremiah wrote about himself, "The LORD said to me, I knew you before you were formed within your mother's womb; before you were born I sanctified you and appointed you as my spokesman to the world" (Jer. 1:4-5, TLB). These two individuals were hardly inhuman embryos before their birth. They were already known to the Creator, who had assigned them a life's work by divine decree.

3. In the book of Genesis we are told that Isaac pleaded with Jehovah to give Rebekah a child, for even after many years of marriage she had no children. Then at last she became pregnant. And it seemed as though children were fighting each other inside her!

"I can't endure this," she exclaimed.

So she asked the Lord about it. And he told her: "The sons in your womb shall become two rival nations. One will be stronger than the other; and the older shall be the servant of the younger!" (Gen. 25:21-23, TLB).

Again, God was aware of the developing personalities in these unborn twins and foretold their future conflicts. The mutual hatred of their descendants is still evident in the Middle East today.

4. Jesus Himself was conceived by the Holy Spirit, which fixes God's involvement with Christ from the time He was a single cell inside Mary's uterus (Matt. 1:18).

5. The most dramatic example, however, is found in the 139th Psalm. King David describes his own prenatal relationship with God, which is stunning in its impact.

"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. You were there while I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book!" (Psalm 139:13-16, TLB).

That passage is thrilling to me, because it implies that God not only scheduled each day of David's life, but He did the same for me. He was there when I was being formed in utter seclusion, and He personally made all the delicate inner parts of my body.

Imagine that! The Great Creator of the universe lovingly supervised my development during those preconscious days in utero, as He did for every human being on earth. Surely, anyone who can grasp that concept without sensing an exhilaration is stone-cold dead!

From my point of view, these scriptural references absolutely refute the notion that unborn children do not have a soul or personhood until they are born at full term.

I can't believe it!

No rationalization can justify detaching a healthy little human being from his place of safety and leaving him to suffocate on a porcelain table.

No social or financial considerations can counterbalance our collective guilt for destroying those lives which were being fashioned in the image of God Himself.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus revealed a tenderness toward boys and girls ("Suffer little children to come unto me"), and some of his most frightening warnings were addressed to those who would hurt them.

It is my deepest conviction that He will not hold us blameless for our wanton infanticide. As He said to Cain, who killed Abel, "Your brother's blood calls to me from the ground!" Surely other Christians have drawn the same conclusion.

I must ask: Where are those moral leaders who agree with me?

Why have pastors and ministers been so timid and mute on this vital matter?

It is time that the Christian church found its tongue and spoke in defense of the unborn children who are unable to plead for their own lives.