

ABORTION

January 19, 2003

Dr. Jerry Nelson, Southern Gables Church

This is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday; until 30 years ago such an emphasis was unnecessary.

But one tragic phenomenon has made the emphasis necessary.

Abortion! Abortion is truly an emotional personal issue for anyone involved.

But just because it is very personal and has been made highly political does not escape the fact that it is also a very moral issue that must be faced by all of us.

But even as I speak forthrightly on this sensitive issue I am particularly concerned for those who have already had or encouraged an abortion.

We believe that God forgives.

The grace of God is so great as to include all of us who confess and turn away from our sin.

The Bible speaks of the forgiveness of all kinds of sins, even the worst (witness the experience of the Apostle Paul).

God can and will forgive any one and any sin.

Many women and men have been party to abortions in the past and have already or even now seek God's forgiveness.

We believe God will definitely forgive and restore.

This sermon must be understood in the light of that grace.

Over the phone, to the nurse in charge, the doctor said, "Place it in a basin, cover it with a towel, move it to the utility room, and check it every five minutes until the heart stops beating."

Seventeen year-old Marcy had decided just recently and with great difficulty to go ahead with this abortion just twenty weeks into an unwanted pregnancy.

Usually, after several hours of hard labor caused by an injection...the fetus is stillborn, but Marcy had delivered a live

baby girl who weighed under a pound.

The Nurse wrapped the baby in a towel, cut the umbilical cord, and headed for the utility room, agonizing over what to do.

She thought to herself, "I can't do this... This baby is alive. I may get in serious trouble but I must give her a chance."

She contacted the pediatrician on call and the doctor's response was, "I'd rather not get involved. The intent of the procedure was the death of the fetus - besides it couldn't possibly survive at this age and size. You can take it to the nursery if you want but I won't treat it."

Gently the nurse placed the newborn in a bassinette, kept her warm, tried to sooth her and watched helplessly for an hour as she struggled to survive.

After an hour the struggling stopped and the child was dead.

Again the nurse wondered, "Do we need to complete a birth and death certificate? We would have if the mother had wanted this child. In that case we would have done everything possible to save her and we would have all shared in the sorrow of her death" (Story from [Life and Death Decisions](#))

Doctor Robert Orr asks: "What kind of societal ethic allows taking the lives of unborn babies in one room while encouraging the medical team in the next room to heroically save lives of babies the same size and age, when the only difference is that one is wanted and the other is not?" (p48 [Life and Death Decisions](#) Orr et al.) Can both actions be right?!

Many people try to avoid the issue of abortion by calling abortion a matter of **private conscience** or a matter of **public politics**.

But taking the life of another human being is neither a private nor political issue. **It is a very public moral issue.**

People have been arguing about abortion for 30 years, is it really still an issue?

The Alan Guttmacher Institute is an affiliate of Planned Parenthood: By their own statistics there are:

- 151 abortions in this country every hour.

- A baby is aborted every 24 seconds; Over 3600 each day; and over 1.3 million every year.
- Over 42 million unborn children have been aborted since Roe v. Wade.
- 25 times more unborn babies have died in this country through abortion than all the deaths in all the wars of U.S. history.

(stats from FACTBOT Database of D.C. Metro Prolife internet here after referred to as Factbot)

SOMETHING CHANGED IN AMERICA:

Up until at least the 1960s American public opinion and American law protected the unborn:

- Before 1970, Planned Parenthood which now aggressively promotes abortions wrote "An abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun."
(FACTBOT p3)
- In 1971-72 Thirty-three state legislatures independently debated the abortion issue and all 33 retained their laws making it illegal.
- Years before, the American Medical Association unanimously adopted a resolution condemning "the procuring of abortion, at every period" of the development of the baby..."
- The Hippocratic Oath of medical doctors reads in part "I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy"
- The United Nations declaration on the Rights of a Child in 1959 declared "the child by reasons of his physical and mental immaturity needs special safeguards...BEFORE as well as after birth." (all the above quotes are from FACTBOT)

In 30 years, that has completely changed!

- Now the laws and Courts of the land make it illegal to RESTRICT abortion.
- Now the U.N. wants to pay for them.
- Now the AMA supports it.
- Now Planned Parenthood has made abortion their number one program (In the latest statistics I could find, they provided prenatal care for 4,700 women and abortions for 122,000) (FACTBOT)

WHAT HAPPENED?

Moral reasoning changed!

UNTIL RECENTLY:

Most believed there is a creator God and that that God has provided rules and principles by which to live and that right and wrong are measured by God's standards.

NOW FOR MANY: There is no personal God - therefore we are on our own and thus we are sovereign and we set our own standards and they are relative and the morality of an act is determined by results not rules. (p 52 of Life and Death Decisions)

We now have a society that has raised autonomy to the height of God.

Liberty has come to mean, unrestrained self-expression.

And this definition of liberty trumps all other considerations.

The unencumbered SELF is the highest law in the land.

And so decisions on hamburgers, beverages, cars, careers, and even divorce and abortion are made on what is best for ME!

That is not an idle statement.

In our country, the individual has become the court of last review on decisions.

George Grant wrote "Even among evangelical Christians there is only a tenuous and uncomfortable consensus on the question (of abortion) The harsh realities of living in a progressively depraved culture - with its epidemics of infidelity, divorce, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and pornography, to say nothing of a host of other modern woes - have somehow tempered our zeal. Recent surveys and polls indicate that most evangelicals hold strongly to the belief that abortion is sin - until THEIR teenage daughter gets pregnant. In the moment of crisis, abortion becomes a difficult and complex issue - even for seemingly committed pro-life believers. It suddenly becomes an issue of establishing priorities; of protecting reputations; of pragmatism...." - of making decisions based on self and moral relativity rather than on the standards of God. (Nov-Dec, 1992 ACTION magazine)

Based on MORAL RELATIVISM, we americans have convinced ourselves of several things:

First of all we have convinced ourselves that morality, including the morality of abortion, is an individual and personal decision.

Several years ago we surveyed our own students here at SGC.

Listen to their response to this question about abortion:

"If a friend came to you and told you she was pregnant. What would you say."

19% said they'd tell her abortion is wrong.

BUT 81% said they'd tell her how they feel personally, but tell her it's her own choice to make.

Relativism is rampant even in our churches.

By whose standards do we make the most important decisions of life?

God's or our own sense of what is right at the moment?

Personal autonomy and choice have become higher values than someone's life.

Listen to that same moral relativism made in the statement of so many:

"I'm personally against abortion but I can't object if someone else believes it is right for them."

By whose standard is the decision made? - The standard of the self!

Do we actually mean that?

With that same logic would we say: "I am personally against killing all Jews but I don't object if someone else believes it is right for them?"

Is each person truly the final judge on all his or her own actions?

Some suggest that no one has the right to impose their morality on another.

BUT we impose morality all the time.

We have laws that impose penalties on murder, theft, tax evasion, etc. etc.

And Roe v. Wade imposed a morality on this nation (it forced those who see abortion as murder to accept it for their society).

The only question is whose morality will we impose.

Based on moral relativism, we Americans have convinced ourselves of something else:

We have also convinced ourselves that a FETUS IS NOT A BABY!

Not that long ago, Virginia Abernethy, of the Vanderbilt School of Medicine said, "I don't think an abortion is ever wrong. As long as an individual is completely dependent upon the mother, it is not a person."

Even Newsweek's editor had the sense to see where such an argument carries us and the editor wrote: "In this view, which is shared by other pro-choice theorists, an individual becomes a person ONLY when he or she becomes a responsible moral agent- around three or four." (FACTBOT from Newsweek Jan 14, 1985 p16)

Listen to the words of Kathline Ragsdale, Episcopal priest and chair of the board of religious coalition for reproductive rights in Washington D.C.:

"I do not think a third-trimester fetus (those are the last three months before birth) has the attributes of personhood, but it is getting closer to viability.

She was then asked: " In other words is it like a sliding scale or a gradual chart that, as the fetus gets older, there needs to be a more important reason to have an abortion?

To which Ragsdale replied: "Yes, I could go with that. "...life does NOT begin at conception." (March/April 95 THE DOOR)

In 1973 Justice Douglas of our Supreme Court wrote that the unborn has no "right" to life.

BUT in 1972, one year before Roe V Wade he wrote in a Sierra Club law suit that valleys, lakes, rivers, beaches, etc have rights - the "voice of the inanimate objects (trees, valleys, etc) should not be stilled."

Unborn children have no rights but lakes and valleys do! P 29 of Beckwith Politically Correct Death.

Our Supreme Court decided in 1973 that the fetus wasn't a person and for

the past 30 years we have been trying to convince ourselves that is true.

In our moral relativism we have also convinced ourselves that many women are better off through an abortion.

And so the reasons why women seek an abortion are myriad:

- Surely an abortion is better than giving birth to a deformed child.
- Surely an abortion is better than seeing a child live in an abusive home.
- Surely an abortion is better than an unwanted and unloved child.
- Surely an abortion is better than a child living in poverty.
- Surely my needs for an education or for a job to support the children I already have are more important issues than an abortion.

And so having convinced ourselves of those and other issues we now have ABORTION ON DEMAND in this country!

There is **a COMMON MYTH** circulating in this country.

It is that **abortions can only take place in the first 23 weeks of pregnancy and after that only to save the life of the mother.**

THAT IS FALSE and anyone who will take the time to read will know it!

Because the Supreme Court added the words "health" to the reasons allowing for abortion - Abortions may be performed at any stage of the pregnancy and at any stage of the child's development, if in the opinion of the woman her "health" is at stake.

Now that might sound reasonable until you read how the Court defines "health": All medical, psychological, social, familial, and economic factors which might cause her to want to end the pregnancy - to have an abortion are applicable. (see Doe v. Bolton Supreme Court decision)

THERE ARE THEREFORE NO MORE RESTRICTIONS ON TAKING THE UNBORN CHILD'S LIFE IN THE LAST DAY OF GESTATION THAN IN THE FIRST DAY.

Dr. Francis Beckwith wrote: "So it is safe to say that in the first six months of pregnancy a woman can have an abortion for NO reason, but in the last three months she can have it for ANY reason. This is abortion on demand" (Beckwith p 34)

- Practice bears this out: The Center for Disease Control reported in Nov 2002 that 45% of those who have an abortion have had one or more previous abortions, and 19% had had two or more previous abortions. CDC, "Abortion Surveillance United States, 1999," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Nov. 29, 2002, Vol. 51, No. SS-9, p. 3 & 4.
- 50% of the women who have abortions use it as their sole means of birth control.
- 42% of all baby girls are aborted whereas only 25% of baby boys are aborted. That is sex selection. (FACTBOT)

I hope you have heard of Partial-birth abortions.

So entrenched is abortion on demand that our last President vetoed a bill that would have made partial-birth abortion illegal unless the mother's life was in danger.

Partial-birth abortions are performed on late-term babies wherein the child is partially delivered and then killed to complete the delivery.

President Clinton said he wanted the bill to make an exception not only when the mother's life was at risk but also when her "health" was at risk.

By adding the word "health" the bill would have been meaningless because the courts have already defined "health" as anything the woman wants it to be.

For example when Clinton vetoed the bill he invited a woman to talk about her potentially handicapped baby.

Apparently that woman and the President believed her "health" was at risk if she had to care for a handicapped child.

The overwhelming number of partial-birth abortions are not to protect a woman:

A Dr. Haskell in an interview with the American Medical Association newspaper said, "I'll be quite frank: most of my (partial-birth) abortions are elective... and in my particular case probably 20% are for genetic reasons and the other 80% are purely elective."

Dr. James McMahon before the House Judiciary Committee said nine of his "fetal indication" cases (meaning deformed fetuses aborted by the partial-birth technique) were for cleft palate.

The law of this land is abortion on demand.

Contrary to what we have tried to convince ourselves - the fetus IS a HUMAN BEING!

God's Word says it is:

- Isaiah 44:2 God formed you in the womb.
- Psalm 139:13-14 God knit the psalmist together in his mothers' womb.
- Jeremiah 1:5 God says that before I formed you in the womb I knew you.
- Of John the Baptist it says that he was filled with the Holy Spirit while in his mother's womb.
- In Exodus 21 it is a capital offense - one punishable by death to cause a woman's unborn baby to die.

The same punishment applies to the death of the unborn as to the born.

Not only does God's word say abortion is evil, but for the sake of those who don't believe God's word, so do the scientists:

Dr. Micheline Matthews-Roth, principal research associate in the department of medicine at Harvard Medical School wrote:

"So, therefore, it is scientifically correct to say that an individual human life begins at conception, when egg and sperm join to form the zygote, and this developing human always is a member of our species in all stages of its life." p 43 in Beckwith

A subcommittee reporting to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee wrote:

"No witness who testified before the subcommittee raised any evidence to refute the biological fact that from the moment of conception there exists a distinct individual being who is alive and is of the human species."

So from a strictly scientific point of view, there is no doubt that the development of an individual human life begins at conception. p43 Beckwith

Not only does SCIENCE confirm it but WE ALL KNOW IT!

Dr. Anne Speckhard of the Univ. of Minnesota did a study in which 96% of the women who had had an abortion - 5-10 years later said they felt they had taken a human life.

Why? Because they knew it was a baby!

Dr. Dorfman writing in OB/GYN News said something that all of us know:

"Seeing an (enlarged) image of the embryo she is carrying can be distressing to a woman about to undergo an abortion."

Some abortion clinic manuals will say, "Never let them see an ultrasound." in Feb of 1986

Why? Because the mother will know it is a baby.

39,000 women who have had an abortion are members of the National Abortion Rights League BUT 245,000 other women who have had an abortion are members of the National Right to Life committee.

Why? Because they know it's a baby. (above quotes from FACTBOT)

Frankly only those unwilling to study the facts any longer reject the obvious - it is a baby!

And since it is a baby ALL OUR ARGUMENTS in support of abortion begin to fall apart.

Even SUPREME COURT JUSTICE HARRY BLACKMUN who wrote the majority opinion in Roe v Wade wrote this in that same ruling: If the suggestion of personhood (of the unborn) is established, the abortionist's (appellant's) case, of course, collapses, for the fetus' right to life is then guaranteed specifically by the 14th Amendment"

How far will we go?

Listen to some of the other arguments:

1. Some argue that abortion ought to be allowed in the cases of the severely deformed or mentally handicapped unborn.

Less than 1% of abortions are for this reason.

And Dr Dorfman admitted that many of his abortions were because the baby had a cleft palate.

BUT do we really know when someone is better off dead? And overwhelmingly the handicapped among us, and their families, do not wish they had been aborted.

BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, just because someone is handicapped doesn't mean they are not a person.

AND since they are a person we have no right, no matter how seriously impaired they may be, to kill them.

2. Another argument that falls apart is that BABIES WOULD BE BETTER OFF DEAD THAN BORN INTO ABUSIVE SITUATIONS:

But since when did whether a person was wanted or not or whether they might be abused become the criteria which judges whether they should live or die?

3. What about women who JUST CAN'T AFFORD another baby?

If it IS a baby then we would never say "hardship justifies homicide."

4. Some would argue that RAPE is reason for an abortion.

There is time after a rape for conception to be prohibited.

But once conception takes place, difficult as the situation is, - once another person, the baby, is involved - the rules change.

At no other time in a child's life do we kill it simply because its father was a deviant.

5. Still others will argue that the RIGHTS of the MOTHER supersede the rights of the baby- That if her life will be miserable because she gives birth to this child then she has the right to abort it.

That might be true if the fetus wasn't a baby.

But it is a baby - a human being.

And none of us would justify any mother or father killing their children because life was hard. In fact we are outraged when they do so.

SO WHAT DO WE DO?

For 30 years pro-life and pro-choice people have been squaring off against each other in angry discourse and it hasn't gotten us very far. I suggest seven actions to attempt to turn this nation around:

1. Admit the truth to ourselves - it is a baby!

Stop trying to pretend that maybe abortion is OK.

If you doubt it is a human being then read the literature, study the facts, listen to the experts.

Naomi Wolf, a radical pro-choice advocate has admitted what many are unwilling to admit when she writes: "I maintain that we need... to defend abortion rights within a moral framework that admits that the death of a fetus is a real death." (New Republic Oct 16, 1995)

Let's stop pretending it's not a baby.

2. Let's tell the truth.

This means learning the truth and then patiently telling it to friends, family, schoolmates, and co-workers.

Never with anger but always with a prayer that they will see and understand.

There is a lot of material available.

Abraham Lincoln wrote: "We know that in the final analysis durable judicial rulings on major issues must be rooted in the soil of American opinion. 'Public sentiment', he said, 'is everything' in this country.

'With it nothing can fail; against it, nothing can succeed.'" (from McKenna in The Atlantic Monthly Sept 95)

We must change public opinion by telling the truth everywhere we can.

It **is** a baby and that **does** make a difference.

3. Join with women to find a real solution to problem pregnancies - solutions that fit for both the mother and the baby.

Again I quote from Matthews-Green: "It's insane to think that mothers and their children need to compete and only one can survive." (Matthews-Green in THE DOOR)

I encourage you to stop and talk to representatives of two ministries in our Welcome Center – ministries that are doing something about the issue.

4. Let's work to reduce abortion.

70% of Americans dislike or detest abortion – even those who support it.

(Matthews-Green in THE DOOR)

Then let's join hands even with pro-choicers to make abortion "rare".

- Let's put effort into changing the culture that has a higher teen-pregnancy rate than any other civilized nation.
- Let's make certain our Alternative Pregnancy Centers have the funds to advertise and provide alternatives to abortion.
- Let's work at making certain that families and fathers of the unborn support the choice of birth instead of abortion.
- Let's invest in strengthening marriages, teaching parenting, and guarding our students and young adults during their most vulnerable years.
- Let's get serious about reducing the cheap and even perverted sexuality that floods our media - a perversion that is contrary to life, as we want it for our children.
- Let's get serious about setting standards for ourselves - standards that our children can profitably emulate.

5. Let's nominate and elect politicians who are as concerned for the unborn as they are for the voting public.

Again it is not an either-or: Either pro-child or pro-woman but PRO woman and child. - Let's elect men and women who believe that and act on it.

6. Let's PRAY!

How long since you or I have prayed that God would change the culture of this nation?

How long since we have pleaded with God to change people's minds and hearts to stop the killing and change our society?