

4 Hard Questions We Must Ask Ourselves About Abortion

You would just about have to live under a rock to not know that our nation is embroiled in a national debate on abortion. Actually—the debating stopped, and battle lines were drawn when New York passed the Reproductive Health Act allowing an abortion right up to the point of birth, announced in the New York Senate chambers to thunderous applause and a standing ovation. Later that same night, the One World Trade Center was lit up in pink in celebration of this brazen legislation.

What New York Mayor Bill de Blasio and the entire abortion lobby failed to recognize was that when those buildings were lit in pink, it was akin to signal fires of old and those pink lights sent a thousand Paul Reveres galloping into the night to prepare for an invasion. Many of the states that are now adopting some of the most restrictive abortion laws since 1973 are doing so as a way of drawing a line in the sand—battle lines. One side believes it is protecting the reproductive rights of women and the other believes they are protecting the life of an innocent child, with both sides believing that the very moral fabric of our society is at stake.

I would like to interject a non-political way of looking at this divide with what I believe are some basic truths and then pose some questions that I believe have to be answered by both sides of this debate. If there is anything I have learned about people, it's that, when divided, neither side is able to articulate the opposition's position to the satisfaction of the opposition. Instead, they make assumptions and fill in the blanks themselves. A greater divide ensues.

Case in point: Most pro-choice people have no desire to devalue life, rather, they believe they are fighting for life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I believe, just as

Abby Johnson made so clear in the recent movie *Unplanned*, that many, if not all, Christians (doctors, nurses, staff) who work in hospitals that perform abortions or abortion clinics believe they are doing God's will. They feel like they are defending a life. The same would be the case for every pro-life protester, doctor, nurse, or even politician—they believe they are trying to protect a human life. When we villainize those who see this issue differently we speak with selfish language and ascribe motives and values that are flatly untrue. And Satan laughs. He has divided, he has marginalized, he has created division—even violent division between two sets of people with the same Father—the same Creator.

Rather than making political or religious points of view I would rather propose four very simple questions to the medical profession, legislators, and citizens of every political persuasion that I believe should frame the abortion debate in a very powerful way. I believe that God's heart on the matter of abortion can be found in the answers to these four questions, regardless of your political affiliation.

The Four Defining Moral Questions for the Abortion Search for Truth

Question 1: When does life begin?

Question 2: When is it ever acceptable for anyone other than God to decide if another person should live or die?

Question 3: When did "reproductive rights" expand to include the right to take another person's life?

Question 4: How can we have a productive conversation on a topic that even divides evangelicals--pregnancy by rape?

Allow me to unpack each question above as humbly and with as much truth as I possibly can, respecting people on both sides of this issue that is raging in our nation's capital and in neighborhoods everywhere.

Question 1: When does life begin?

I will never forget hearing this question asked for the first time at an evangelical political event at Saddleback Church in California. Rick Warren was the moderator. Pastors from all over the western United States packed the 3000-seat auditorium for this time of questions and answers from the two main 2008 presidential candidates Barak Obama and John McCain. Each were interviewed separately. Barak Obama went first. I will never forget eventual president Barak Obama's response to this question:

Rick Warren: "First question. When does life begin?"

Barak Obama: (he shifted a little, then smiled and said) "I'm afraid that question is above my pay grade to answer."

He meant no disrespect in his response, and I'm sure he was trying to be as careful as possible, knowing he was in a room filled with evangelical pastors. He went on to explain that this was really a question for the medical science community to decide and work through.

While this may have been a plausible response in the year 2008, in the year 2019, it's a question that has been asked and answered by the medical science community and the answer can be found with any simple google search. Add to that a simple image search and you will find pictures and diagrams and complete medical explanations for every stage of development of a child in the womb of a mother from inception to birth.

Ask any husband or wife trying to get pregnant if they can predict when they will actually conceive and they will tell you there really is no absolute formula to be able to say, "This time, we will conceive." And some never do. So for those who say life begins at conception, it's not because they are extreme or dogmatic, it's simply because they believe that conception happens when God decides and therefore life begins

at conception. They would quote Psalm 139 when it says, “you wove me in my mother’s womb” (v. 13b) or Jeremiah 1:5a where it says, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you” and many more Scriptures that say the same thing.

Then there is the greatest evidence for a Scripture-based factor for when life begins—Jesus. When did life begin for Jesus? Was it when He had a heartbeat? When He became viable? When He had hands and fingers and eyes and ears? Or was it the very moment when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, that point of conception?

While you may be able to reason other benchmarks for when life technically begins, you will never be able to make that case using Scripture.

Question 2: When is it ever acceptable for anyone other than God to decide if another person should live or die?

This one won’t take long to answer. It never is. Immediately the issue of capital punishment comes to the forefront, and I believe both sides have good arguments. But to compare this debate to the issue of taking the life of a child is a faulty comparison. In the case of capital punishment the decision is made by a judge and a jury for the worst crime possible that has been committed. There is actually more consideration and more due process afforded a murderer than there is for a defenseless unborn child.

People on both sides of the abortion debate would agree it is not OK to take a life, but people who are pro-choice have somehow been convinced in their mind that an abortion is not the taking of a life. But it’s a head in the sand approach. At any stage of a pregnancy, and, scripture aside, certainly after there is a heartbeat, this is a human being. To abort means the intentional taking of that life. This isn’t conjecture or a political talking point. This is the truth. To abort a child is to take a life.

Question 3: When did “reproductive rights” expand to include the right to take another person’s life?

This is really where the debate is framed for a person who is pro-choice, and I do not blame them for drawing this line in the sand. Abortion proponents are simply believing what they have been told by the media, 46 years of pop-culture, the education system and Planned Parenthood clinics nationwide. They have been told that abortion is right and legal because it falls under the category of protecting a “woman’s reproductive rights.” They are told things like, “It’s just tissue. It’s just a simple medical procedure. The fetus will not feel any pain. It will be over quickly and humanely. It’s your right and no one else’s decision.”

I want to be clear. I, in no way, see the taking of a life of a child as a reproductive right. A person’s personal rights, reproductive or otherwise, do not include any right or permission to harm or take the life of another human being, and it never has. We never should have allowed this false, unscientific addition to the definition of “reproductive rights” to stand without vigorous opposition.

We have to constantly ask the question: What about the second person? Unborn children have rights too, and they are a separate person in the eyes of God and even in the eyes of medical science. The person who says every person who is pro-life is anti-reproductive rights does not speak for me or represent my views. Conversely, until a person who is pro-choice can acknowledge there is a second person in the equation who also has rights, their argument is disingenuous and refuses to acknowledge basic scientific truth.

I love the now-famous words of Abby Johnson, the former Planned Parenthood Employee of the Year turned anti-abortion spokesperson from the movie *Unplanned* when she said: “I pray for the day when abortion in the United States of America is not just illegal; but rather it is unthinkable.”

Question 4: How can we have a productive conversation on a topic that even divides evangelicals--pregnancy by rape?

This topic, especially in light of recent legislation passed in Alabama, has brought the issue of criminalizing abortion for rape victims to the forefront--and that's exactly what abortion proponents want the most--distract from 99% of all abortions by getting the body of Christ to debate and argue the 1%. But this doesn't negate the fact that nearly 1% of all abortions are due to rape. In some states it's less than 1%. But while 1% seems like a low percentage, between 2015 and 2017, this was 26,840 women. It's no small matter for these women.

Rather than give a logical, theological explanation, let me say what I do know about this topic:

1. Though men may hold most of the seats in state and federal houses of government, this is an issue where women have to weigh in and men need to sit down and listen. It's women who would have to carry a baby to term--for many women, the baby of their worst nightmare. It will be women who have to go through the physical stages of pregnancy and the social, financial and professional consequences of an unplanned pregnancy. Women need to have a say and be heard.
2. Any discussion on this topic would be ill-informed if it does not include input from women who have carried a pregnancy from a rape to term.
3. Any discussion on this topic would be ill-informed if it does not include input from men and women who were born the products of a rape.
4. Any policy a state or federal law-making group (House and Senate) makes surrounding a pregnancy related to a rape would be ill-advised to not also make extraordinary provisions, financial and otherwise, to assist these women from conception and extending past delivery, with medical, emotional, and spiritual support and services.

5. Incentives and extraordinary provision for women that carry these pregnancies would be far wiser than making it illegal for those who do not.

The questions in the beginning of the article for a pregnancy may still be the same for a rape victim: When does life begin? When is it ever OK to take a life? When did reproductive rights expand to include taking of a life? But the circumstances, the hurt, the trauma and the injustice of this kind of pregnancy are vastly different and warrant a different approach from the church and certainly from our state houses.

I would be remiss if I did not add this as it relates to victims of rape who find themselves pregnant. I cannot think of a more difficult task, on every level—no greater offense and no tougher road. But I can tell you this with great certainty—if you do carry that child to delivery, you will not be alone. With great travail and with great injustice at the hands of man comes great reward and extraordinary promise from your Father in heaven. There are no words to explain what you have been through—but you have never been alone—and will never be alone. If you will let Him, God will take your broken pieces and form something amazing. Please forgive the harsh rhetoric and callous approach many have taken to your extraordinary situation.

Final Thoughts

For the Christian, every decision and stance on the topic of abortion must begin with respect for those who see this differently. Most are just doing their best to develop beliefs based on the information they have been given. Some truly live with a bitterness and hate for all things Christian or religious and they are motivated by hurt received at the hands of a religious person. And, just like it says in Joel, millions are in that valley of decision. How we treat them as they decide—and the way they see us treating those who differ with our position—will help them decide. So lead with love.

Discuss with love. Legislate with love. And let the Holy Spirit do the convicting.

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