

Carl Lentz, 'The View' and Abortion

After his appearance on *The View* on October 30, Carl Lentz, pastor of Hillsong Church in New York City, was blasted for what appeared to be a total cop-out answer on national TV.

When asked by Joy Behar if abortion was considered a sin in his church, he replied, "That's the kind of conversation we would have finding out your story, where you're from, what you believe. I mean, God's the judge," at which point the audience broke into raucous applause. "People have to live to their own convictions," Lentz continued. "That's such a broad question, to me, I'm going higher. I want to sit with somebody and say, 'What do you believe?'"

"So it's not an open-and-shut case to you?" Behar asked. "Some people would say it is," Lentz responded. "To me, I'm trying to teach people who Jesus is first, and find out their story. Before I start picking and choosing what I think is sin in your life, I'd like to know your name."

For this answer, he was taken to task on the Federalist ("Hillsong Pastor Carl Lentz Provides Moral Cover for Abortion on 'The View'"), the Daily Wire (Lentz wouldn't answer "a slam-dunk of a theological question that a 2-year-old could answer correctly"), and Life News ("Hillsong Pastor Carl Lentz Refuses to Say If Abortion is Sinful: 'Live to Your Own Convictions'"), while the popular blogger, Matt Walsh called for him to resign on Twitter (see also [here](#).)

To be perfectly honest, if I didn't know Pastor Lentz personally, my response would have been just as strong (and swift). It appeared that he dodged a very simple question, one that required a very simple answer.

Really now, is there any ambiguity when it comes to abortion?

We're talking about taking the life of a preborn child. What is unclear or uncertain about that?

I absolutely wish that Pastor Lentz had replied directly and said something like, "Of course abortion is sinful. If you recognize that is a baby in the womb, then to slice it up or poison it or kill it in any way is wrong in God's sight. But having an abortion is not an unforgivable sin, and there is hope for every woman who has aborted her child. Jesus died for that sin too, and he offers forgiveness through the cross."

But because I have found Pastor Lentz to be both approachable and teachable, rather than comment on his interview first, I reached out to him directly.

What I learned is that he is passionately pro-life and feels this is something he needs to address much more in the future. (I was not aware of this because we never discussed it before.)

He also pointed me back to an extensive, 2015 article in *GQ* magazine, in which he said this to journalist Taffy Brodesser-Akner when asked about abortion: "If you sit down with me and you say, 'Carl, I'm having an abortion,' I'm going to say, 'I think that you can have this child. I don't know how hard it's going to be. I could never imagine. I do know that my prayer is that God will give you peace to stand on this side with me. Should you choose another option, I will not turn my back on you. I will not vilify you. I will not hate you. I will not, I cannot, live your life. I love you regardless, but my prayer is that somehow, some way, you will see my view on this.'" (This particular comment was featured as well as in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in an article titled "10 Things to Know About Hillsong Church.")

Why, then, did he give such an ambiguous answer on *The View*?

Reading between the lines, it appears that he was told to expect one thing during the interview and when Joy Behar

decided to change direction, he refused to play into her game, wanting to make clear that before he talks to a lost person about abortion, he wants to get to know them personally. As he said, "Before I start picking and choosing what I think is sin in your life, I'd like to know your name."

Again, do I wish he did things differently? Absolutely, but he gives account to God not to me.

That being said, in the uproar after the interview, Pastor Lentz issued this statement on Twitter: "Recently in an interview, I was asked directly if abortion was sin. I did not answer the question directly for a number of reasons and that has caused some confusion about our stance as a church on this matter. I do believe abortion is sinful. Our prayer is that we can continue to help and love those that deal with the pain of regret from personal choices, rather than cast further shame and guilt on those already carrying so much and create a church that can teach people how to form convictions based on God's word, that will be the driving force in all their decisions. I will continue to point people to Jesus, above all else, every opportunity I get. The story of God's redemptive grace, available to all, is the best news available."

I know that many remain disappointed in Pastor Lentz and some believe his Twitter post was too little, too late. But since he had made his position clear in 2015 (in a totally secular context) and has now reiterated that he believes abortion is sinful, I suggest that we pray for him and encourage him rather than throw him under the bus.

My prayer is that God will make Carl Lentz a champion in the pro-life movement, a clear voice of grace and truth, and one who also helps many of those who have had abortions to find new life in Jesus. To the best of my knowledge, Pastor Lentz would warmly welcome such prayers.