



ABORTION AND THE DIGNITY OF THE UNBORN

To diminish human dignity, in any form, is to snuff out the image of God.

IN HIS IMAGE

Every pro-life conversation must begin with an understanding that human beings are created in the image of God—that is, we are

created with innate qualities and features that make us like God. By our very nature, human beings “image” or reflect God’s likeness back into His creation. This foundational truth has tremendous implications for us both in how we relate to God and how we relate to others.

As image-bearers made in His likeness, we have been given authority to act as His representatives in the world (Gen. 1:26-27). This God-given authority is right and good, but because of sin, it is often misdirected. When God is not in His rightful place on the throne of our hearts, our inclination is to exalt ourselves over others. We begin to believe that some people are more important and more inherently significant than others. This is a fatal error that propagated the institution of slavery and fuels human trafficking.¹ It is the very same lie that says a mother’s life is more important than the life she is carrying inside her.

Jesus stands with those the rest of the world deems less than equal. In His kingdom, a person’s value does not come from perceived usefulness or apparent worth. It comes from the reality that the image of God is stamped upon every human soul. If we are truly following Christ, we cannot only proclaim the sanctity of human life; we must actively demonstrate our love for the people God has created in His image.²

ABORTION IN AMERICA

Sometimes parents are tempted to push off tough conversations about abortion in order to shelter their children from the ugliness of the subject. But if we are to be faithful followers of Jesus, it is critical that we teach our kids about the value of human life and

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what it means to stand up for the unborn. Before we look at the Bible's teaching on human dignity, consider for a moment the following information about abortion in America. Nearly half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned and about 40 percent of those end in abortion.³ Between the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision and 2015, more than fifty-seven million unborn babies were killed in the United States.⁴ This is an atrocity. And it is evidence that we have distorted our God-given authority as image-bearers by putting ourselves in the place of God, deciding who should live and who should die.

Logically, we know that if the gestation process is not interrupted, the result is a living, breathing person. Abortion ends this process, which is to say that abortion ends lives. And the truly sad thing is that many people assume the pro-abortion movement has already won on this issue. But even as we recognize that America has in many ways embraced an abortion culture—from a powerful abortion lobby, to the pro-choice messaging coming out of Hollywood, to the subsidizing of abortion providers with public dollars—we also see that there is every reason for hope and optimism.

The pro-life movement has made tremendous strides in recent years. Since the year 2000, young adults aged 18-29 have trended more against abortion than in previous years.⁵ Ultrasound technology has

played an outsized role in this shift. Because ultrasounds allow women to see their unborn babies in the womb, mothers now have photos documenting their child's life long before birth. The significance of this is difficult to overstate. Ultrasounds have confronted us with reality. And as a result, more and more people agree that the occupant of a mother's womb is a living human being.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

In Psalm 139, we see God carefully crafting human life:

For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well. My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret, when I was formed in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began.

PSALM 139:13-16

The Bible regards the life in the womb with all the significance of a person. God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah saying,

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.
JEREMIAH 1:5

While we fight desperately to see the end of abortion, we do so proclaiming the hope of the gospel.

And not only did the Son of God spend nine months in the womb of a virgin (Matt. 1:23), but His very presence in Mary's womb caused another child, John the Baptist, to leap with joy while John himself was in the womb of his own mother (Luke 1:41).

Regardless of whether or not your family has been personally affected by the tragedy of abortion, this issue matters because life matters to God. From womb to tomb, every human being bears the image of God, and every one is precious in His sight.

JESUS WAS "THE LEAST OF THESE"

When we minister to an abortion culture, we must speak for the most vulnerable in society. We should cringe when we hear phrases like "medical waste," "fetus," and "products of conception." This demeaning language attempts to lessen the humanity of the unborn and it ought to trigger in us thoughts of Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:14). He was an "embryo." He was a "fetus." He was a nursing infant. He was a child. He is an adult.

As Christians, we should be clear that an attack on vulnerable humanity is an attack on the image of God. That image is not abstract. The image of God has a name and a blood type. The image of God is Christ Jesus Himself, "the firstborn over all creation" (Col. 1:15). Every human image-bearer is patterned after Jesus, the image of the invisible God.

At the cross, Jesus stood with and for humanity in suffering. Jesus was conceived

in the most vulnerable situation possible in the ancient world—as a fatherless orphan. He lived as a migrant refugee, His family outrunning King Herod, into a land hostile to His own.

It's an amazing story, that God used a young virgin and a quiet carpenter to preserve the life of the Savior. As parents, we can follow their example of obedience by fighting the spiritual powers that seek to kill, steal, and destroy. We do this by communicating the gospel—of the baby who came to give life—to our children and by teaching them to do the same.⁶

MORE THAN ANTI-ABORTION

Being pro-life means more than being anti-abortion. We cannot only be *against*; we must also be *for*. We must adopt a whole life perspective. We care about the unborn because we care about life. We affirm the dignity of the elderly and infirm, and advocate for compassion and the inclusion of the poor, the orphan, and the widow.

Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

JAMES 1:27

Teaching your children to value human life is hard. Talking to them about abortion is even more difficult. But there are some simple and practical ways that you can lead your kids toward a whole life, pro-life ethic.

Here is an easy step. Begin by teaching your kids to love children. Encourage them to volunteer in the nursery at church, to babysit for a neighbor, or to help care for little brothers and sisters. Volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center.

Second, teach your children to value human life from its very beginning to its very end. This means caring for orphans, caring for mothers, and caring for the vulnerable. It means we fight human trafficking and sex slavery, and mentor young, at-risk children too.

Third, pray about fostering or adopting children. Far too often we talk about adoption as a last resort for couples with fertility issues. Not only is adoption essential to advancing the pro-life cause, it is at the heart of the gospel we preach.

All of this work must be fueled by utter dependence upon Christ who stands with each of us in our brokenness.

A GOSPEL OF GRACE

Many of those who fall victim to the abortion culture aren't even pro-choice. They are scared and feel they have no other option. There are girls in your own church and neighborhood who are vulnerable because they're afraid of what others will think when their secret is known. And too many times, this fear leads to a tragic mistake—a sorrow-filled trip to the abortion clinic.

As life altering as it may be, your child having an unplanned pregnancy would not be the worst thing that could happen to you. Why? Because there is hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is the Giver of life. He offers forgiveness and mercy.

God is not surprised by our sin. Just as God sees and knows the tiniest human life

in the womb, He sees the mother in crisis. He sees the father who is afraid.

While we fight desperately to see the end of abortion, we do so proclaiming the hope of the gospel. Our message is one of forgiveness, love, and restoration. And the offer is good for all who believe (Rom. 1:16). We fight against abortion. We care about the vulnerable. But we always preach hope, even to the moms and dads who will never know their children because of the work of a doctor in a clinic.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you ever stop and think about being an image-bearer of God? How should that truth affect the way we live our lives? How should it affect the way you parent your children?
2. How are you teaching your kids to have a whole-life, pro-life ethic?
3. What are you doing to help your children honor and respect the aged and infirmed?
4. What are some practical things you can do as a family to show love and dignity to those who are marginalized in our society?
5. What one thing stood out to you from this article?