THE ANNUNCIATION AND THE BEGINNING OF LIFE
A Brief Study of Luke 1:26-38

Some have argued that there are no Biblical references to prove that life begins at conception. But a quick Scriptural journey to Nazareth and the hill country of Judea shows otherwise—for here we encounter the Annunciation and Visitation accounts that give us a powerful portrait of the sanctity of human life in the womb. It is at Nazareth, not Bethlehem, where God the Son became true man without ceasing to be true God.

The Witness of the Annunciation
We can focus more specifically than even Nazareth as to the place and very moment when the Incarnation occurred. Luke’s Gospel records the response of Jesus’ mother to the angel’s announcement (“Annunciation”) that she had been chosen to bear the Savior of the world: “Let everything you’ve said happen to me” (v.38). Before this moment of his conception God the Son was not yet man; but from this moment onward he was man. Contemplating the wonder and mystery of this encounter, St. Ephraim (306-373 A.D.) wrote: “He (Jesus) entered the womb through her ear.” The Apostle John in the majestic first chapter of his Gospel described what happened this way: “The Word became human and lived among us” (John 1:14). Jesus’ first dwelling was not Bethlehem or Nazareth, but the womb of a young virgin named Mary. This truth has long been recognized by the Church and holds a timely message for the 21st century Christian who accepts the pagan notion of abortion.

The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) reaffirmed the Church’s consistent witness to the sanctity of unborn human life when it stated: “We confess the Holy Virgin to be Mother of God because God the Word was made flesh and became man from the very moment of conception.” In his book, Redeemer in the Womb, author John Saward writes, “the Incarnation was effected in Nazareth but manifested in Bethlehem. The adventure of being human began for the eternal Son at the moment of his conception.”

The Witness of the Visitation
John Saward’s assertion that Jesus’ Incarnation was manifested in Bethlehem when he was born is well taken. The image of the Baby in the manger is powerful! But there is an earlier, impressive manifestation of the Lord while yet unborn. Long before the Wise Men adored Jesus, the unborn John the Baptist, in his sixth month of life, greeted the Savior by leaping for joy in Elizabeth’s womb! We know this from the Gospel of Luke (1:39-41), which suggests that Mary went immediately to visit her cousin Elizabeth after the angel Gabriel’s visit. This would mean that the unborn Jesus whom both Elizabeth and John greet was smaller than the point of a needle!

The Witness of the Holy Spirit
Some still wish to maintain the fiction that “we really don’t know when life begins” or that our “beingness” occurs at some later stage of development. St. Ephraim was among many Christians who demolished this pretension centuries ago: “If man is essentially a whole, then he must be a whole from the beginning: the genesis of body and soul must be simultaneous. This soul is related to that body; that body in relation to that soul. Each must, therefore, belong to the other from the outset.”

Who can deny that from the moment of conception the second person of the holy Trinity was both fully divine and fully human? The coexistent, coeternal Son of God did not exist “in limbo” in Mary’s womb, becoming either a divine or human person at some later point in gestational development, as some heretics have taught through the ages. When the Son of God took up temporary residence in Mary’s womb, the real divine nature and human personhood of Jesus was confirmed by Elizabeth’s Spirit-inspired greeting when she called Mary the “mother of my Lord” (Luke 1:43). Elizabeth spoke these words, “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41) who does not lie. Similarly, the unborn Baptist’s leap was inspired by the Holy Spirit, signifying the approach of the King of Kings though he was yet a tiny
embryo. We dare not dismiss the importance of this encounter, for the Spirit of God teaches us profound truths about the beginning of human life.

One truth is that the Holy One of God, in sanctifying the womb of Mary ("blessed is the child that you will have" Luke 1:42), sanctifies the wombs of all women and bestows an innate value on all unborn children. If we acknowledge that the unborn Jesus was deserving of respect and protection because he was known by the Father and fully human from the moment of his conception—should we not also acknowledge the same of all unborn children regardless of age or condition? Are we not all conceived body and soul, created and known by God, and objects of his providential love from the moment of our conception?

The Witness of the Church
Because the Church has always understood these truths, it has had a high regard for human life from the moment of conception. Little wonder, then, that the Church has condemned the pagan practice of abortion from the earliest days. In the latter part of the first century a collection of Church teachings called the Didache placed those who are “killers of the child, who abort the mold of God” between murderers and adulterers, for all were embarked upon “the Way of Darkness.”

Several times Martin Luther spoke of the humanity of the unborn child, condemning abortion. Commenting on Genesis 49:33, he wrote:

“For no one of those who are alive now can know where he was during the first two years when he lived either in the womb or when, after being brought into the world, he sucked his mother’s milk. He knows nothing about how the days, the nights or the times have been, nor who ruled and had waited for him. And still he lived at that time and he was a body joined together with a soul and he was equipped for all natural functions. Therefore this is a most certain argument and proof that God wants to preserve humanity in a wonderful manner that is completely unknown to humanity.”

The birth canal does not magically transform human-shaped entities into real human beings. As we have seen, the witness of the Annunciation and the Visitation provides compelling reasons for respecting and protecting unborn human life.

Early Christians chose March 25 as the day to celebrate the Annunciation—a date that comes nine months before the birth date of our Lord. The Church would do well to pay more attention to this traditional observance in an age when unborn human beings are legally destroyed throughout all nine months of pregnancy for any reason. That the Son of God entered the world as we do—through the womb—should cause awe in all and fear in those who would presume to invade this sanctuary with instruments of destruction.

Reverend Edward Fehskens
FORGOTTEN FATHERS
Hope for Men Involved in Abortion

Men Hurt Too
For every woman who participates in an abortion, there is a man. Although men are less likely to seek recovery, they suffer many of the same emotional feelings as women.

Jason was 19 years old. He had just joined the military when his girlfriend wrote and told him she was pregnant. “I was scared but excited, I wanted to marry her.” When he returned home after basic training, Jason was informed by his girlfriend’s father that he had taken his daughter for an abortion. Kate’s father told him he would no longer be allowed to see his daughter. That was ten years ago and he still cannot stop thinking about her and his child. Jason says, “I let them both down, I wasn’t there to protect her or my baby.”

Tom was a struggling college student when his girlfriend told him she was pregnant. Tom did what many in his situation have done, he convinced her to get an abortion. “Neither of us wanted to be parents,” he explained, “but I made the appointment for her. I will never forget how her face looked when she came out of the abortion clinic. She looked like she died along with our baby. I still remember going to McDonald’s afterward. It has been twenty years and I still think about her and our baby when I pass there.”

Men Ignored
They have been called forgotten fathers, men stripped of their fundamental right to protect their unborn children. Their grief is not validated by a society that paradoxically demands accountability from the deadbeat dad but scorns the one who wants his child to live.

“Abortion rewrites the rules of masculinity,” says Dr. Vincent Rue, one of the nation’s leading psychologists in post-abortion issues. “Whether or not the male was involved in the abortion decision, his inability to function in a socially prescribed manner leaves him wounded and confused.” Society is not sympathetic to abortion survivors in general, and men are virtually ignored when it comes to abortion.

Men are also bypassed legally. Like Jason, most men do not realize until they face an unplanned pregnancy that they have no rights and no legal recourse to protect their unborn children.

What prevents men from dealing with their past abortions? First, men often don’t know they are suffering because the symptoms of post-abortion stress seem unrelated to the abortion itself—inability to form trusting relationships, difficulty bonding with children, anger, risk taking, depression, suicidal feelings, panic attacks, and addictions. It’s not uncommon that it may take up to ten years before men make the connection between their unhealthy behavior and an abortion.

For men to heal from an abortion they must:
Grieve Men need to grieve and acknowledge that they’ve lost somebody who is dear to them. Men have been taught not to show their feelings. The result is that grown men have a difficult time expressing their own emotions. Many have never seen their fathers cry. Some have never seen another man cry. Combined with their fragile ego and lack of “emotional” role models, it’s understandable why men don’t seek recovery. However, men feel pain just like women. Men grieve the loss of their unborn child just like women.

Forgive It took Jason ten years and Tom twenty years to fully grasp what had happened and to accept God’s love and forgiveness.
Reconcile  After an abortion, 70 percent of relationships end shortly thereafter. Many men seek some sort of reconciliation with those involved. Tom contacted his former girlfriend and apologized for his role. Jason still has a strong need to find his girlfriend and tell her he is sorry for not protecting her.

Accept  “I am a father. My child would have been ten or twenty by now.” Until men begin to acknowledge that abortion has damaged their lives and do something about it, society, families, and the Church will continue to suffer. For men and women alike, the feeling of emptiness may last a lifetime. Parents are parents forever, even of a dead child.

Hope for Fathers in the Fatherhood of God

But there is hope. God loves fathers. He is one. Fathers of aborted children can find hope and comfort in this fact. God is the Father of Jesus and, in him, our Father. The resurrected Jesus said to Mary, “But go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (John 20:17). God understands fatherhood. God understands the loss of a child.

There is hope for fathers who were unable to prevent the abortion of their child. Fathers of aborted children have no focus for their grief. There is no body to view, no funeral to attend, and no graveside to visit. For the most part, society has abandoned these grieving fathers. But God does not abandon them. In Psalm 91, God’s Fatherhood is described as a “fortress.” But he is not a cold, immovable fortress. “He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge. His truth is your shield and armor.” (v.4). God is a warm, loving, and movable fortress who comes where we are. Under God’s wings, fathers of aborted children can grieve and, in the resurrected Jesus, have a “confidence that is alive” (1 Peter 1:3).

There is hope for fathers who were unwilling to protect their children and supported or even demanded the abortion. When our heavenly Father gave up his Son for us on the cross, Jesus’ first words were, “Father, forgive them. They don’t know what they’re doing” (Luke 23:34). The soldiers who nailed Jesus to that cross and then gambled for his clothing really had no idea of the holy innocence of this particular victim of their cruel execution. Although this did not excuse them from their sin, neither did it exclude them from God’s forgiveness.

There is so much acceptance of the “rightness” of abortion in our country and so much pressure that this is the one and only way out of a difficult situation that many rush into abortion without fully understanding the cruel reality of what they’ve done. Although this does not excuse them from their sin, neither does it exclude them from God’s forgiveness. If God can forgive those who crucified his own Son, he can and does forgive those who committed the sin of abortion. “God is faithful and reliable. If we confess our sins, he forgives them and cleanses us from everything we’ve done wrong” (1 John 1:9). God’s justice over sin was satisfied when Jesus suffered sin’s punishment for all sinners on the cross. Because of this our faithful Father will “forgive” (literally “send away”) our sins and “cleanses us” (literally “cleanse completely”). He will do this for “everything” we confess to him including the sin of abortion.

Grace Kern & Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb
GOD’S WORD OF HOPE FOR THOSE WEEPING AFTER AN ABORTION
Matthew 2:18

Surprised by Grief?
We all have grieved the loss of someone at some point in our lives. As you may have experienced, nothing is more painful than the death of a child. In Matthew 2:18, Rachel personifies the Jewish women whose babies were killed by Herod’s soldiers (Matthew 2:16). These women refused to be comforted because of the depth of their grief.

Unfortunately, those who have lost a child because they had an abortion, or were part of an abortion decision, often are not comforted because they are not allowed to grieve. Our society makes no provisions for such grief. Therefore, those involved in an abortion decision often do not allow themselves to grieve because they do not think they should. But such sorrow cannot be suppressed indefinitely.

As you know, grief and shame caught you by surprise. You didn’t expect to have such terrible sorrow following your abortion. At the time of the abortion you may not have realized that your actions would result in the death of another person. The fact that a baby—your own child—is dead as a result of your consent may overwhelm you. We grieve for a person whose fragile life was ended only weeks after it had begun. Only later when it was too late did we realize that this person we never knew was loved. Unlike the “Rachels” of Bethlehem who had no say in the death of their children, your grief may be intensified because of your involvement with your baby’s death.

Emotional Reactions
Adverse emotional reactions often follow an abortion, although in some cases, they may be delayed for many years. They are described as the inability to deal with the anger, sadness, and guilt surrounding the abortion. The resulting symptoms include:

- Emotional numbness.
- Anger.
- Sexual problems.
- Lowered self-esteem.
- Eating disorders.
- Drug/alcohol abuse.

As God’s word says, “They will hate themselves for the evil and disgusting things they have done” (Ezekiel 6:9).

Real Hope in Jesus
The woman who has had an abortion asks, “Who can free me from this hurt and pain?” The answer is provided in and through God’s Son, Jesus Christ. The verse we are discussing, Matthew 2:18, is a quote from the book of Jeremiah. There God continues, “Stop your crying, and wipe away your tears ... Your future is filled with hope” (Jeremiah 31:16-17). Jesus did not come into the world to condemn sinners (John 3:17). He came to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Indeed, Jesus came to be a friend of sinners and to welcome them (Luke 15:1-2). And because Jesus came to bear the guilt and punishment of sin (1 John 4:10), there is hope. You can be healed because “nothing is impossible for God” (Luke 1:37). In the Bible that God wrote for you, his words become your source of healing.

Steps in the Healing Process
Acknowledge Your Sin
First, you must acknowledge that abortion is sin. Then confess that sin and ask God’s forgiveness. We have the promise in 1 John 1:9: “God is faithful and reliable. If we confess
our sins, he forgives them and cleanses us from everything we’ve done wrong.” Please notice that there are no exceptions in that wonderful promise. Abortion is NOT the unpardonable sin.

**Grieve Your Loss**
The healing process also includes grieving your loss. You may find that remorse—a deep sense of guilt or regret, accompanies your grief. But, as you grieve, recognize God is at work in your life. And although this is difficult to understand sometimes, the Bible that God wrote for you reveals “all things work together for the good of those who love God—those whom he has called according to his plan” (Romans 8:28). Unfortunately, many women and men have a difficult time believing that this could apply to something as destructive and devastating as their abortion. But God is faithful to his promises. Be assured, they apply in all situations.

**Deal with Your Shame**
Shame often lingers long after the guilt has been confessed and forgiven. In the book of Romans 6:21 the Apostle Paul asked: “What did you gain by doing those things? You’re ashamed of what you used to do because it ended in death.” Despite seeking God’s forgiveness, your shame may continue to keep you from enjoying your freedom in Christ. Realize, however, that shame may be what brought you to repentance. The shame of your sin can have a healing effect as it steers you to recognize your need for God’s forgiveness. The pain you experienced gives you insights on sin, suffering, and forgiveness.

**Trust God’s Promises**
Trust in God’s promise of mercy. Pray to him and confess your sin. Acknowledge your guilt and take responsibility for your actions. Then, instead of casting you away from his presence, God will declare to you that he has won mercy for you through the suffering and death of his Son, Jesus on the cross. On the cross, Jesus dealt with your sin, guilt, and shame. He tells you, “Your sins are forgiven!” He promises, “So those who are believers in Christ Jesus can no longer be condemned” (Romans 8:1). Those are wonderful words to hear from the God who values your life! You were to blame, and now God no longer condemns you.

Being forgiven by God does not mean that he wipes out all our emotions and memories. However, as you recall all that God has done for you and as you trust in God’s promises and God’s power for your life, your anger and bitterness will eventually be replaced with love and peace. Be assured, there is real hope for your future!

Grace Kern
GOD’S KNITTING ROOM
A Brief Study of Psalm 139

Reading Psalm 139 can be a little frightening because you quickly realize God knows all about you! He knows where you are, what you’re doing, what you’re thinking, and what you’re going to say before you say it (v.1-4)! You also realize that there is no place you can go to escape this all-knowing God. “Where can I go to get away from your Spirit? Where can I run to get away from you?” (v.7). It is almost like Psalm 139 is God’s version of George Orwell’s 1984 poster, “Big Brother is Watching You”!

Intimate and Delicate Language
God is not watching as “Big Brother,” but as your Creator. God knows you because he made you. “You alone created my inner being” (v.13). Here David uses very intimate language. “Created my inner being” is a Hebrew idiom that could be translated, “You made my kidneys!” The kidneys were the last organs removed in the sacrificial process. They denote the very depth of who you are—your “inner being.” Clearly, God was intimately involved in making you who you are from the beginning.

Next David uses delicate language. “You knitted me together inside my mother” (v.13). “Knitted” means to “cover” or “fence in.” There is a progression. God created your very essence (your inner being), and then wove or knitted a covering for “you”—your body. This also seems to confirm the biological process for procreation that God established. You were uniquely “you” at the moment of your conception. Cell division begins and your “covering”—your body—develops.

We know, of course, that God does not have tiny little knitting needles that he uses inside a uterus. However, guided by the Holy Spirit, David paints a picture of God’s intimate and delicate involvement in the formation of life from the moment of conception. As many people know, weaving or knitting is delicate work. It takes concentration to make sure the right strands go in the right place to produce the pattern that will lead to a recognizable whole. The scarf that your grandma knit is not only beautiful because of the amazing pattern of the woven threads, it is beautiful and valuable because of the hands that made it. Your life is amazingly beautiful and valuable, not only because of the miraculous complexity of your body, but because of the hands of your Creator.

The Awe of It All
David was awed by this. “I will give thanks to you because I have been so amazingly and miraculously made. Your works are miraculous, and my soul is fully aware of this” (v.14). Are you “fully aware” of how amazing and miraculous you are? It doesn’t matter what you look like, or how good you are at math, or whether all your parts still work! You are the work of God’s hands! As such, don’t ever question your value. God himself says, “Are you going to give me orders concerning my handiwork?” (Isaiah 45:11). From the moment of conception, God has been involved in your life.

That brings David back to God’s intimate knowledge of you and me. “My bones were not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, when I was being skillfully woven in an underground workshop” (v.15). “Underground workshop” is a reference to the womb. Adam was made from the earth (Genesis 2:7). So the idea of earth, dark, underground, secret place, womb, beginning of life—these would all go together for the Hebrew. David’s point is clear: God knew us even before we were born. He is our “Skillful Weaver.”

In verse 16, God’s knowledge of you before you were born is repeated with an addition. “Your eyes saw me when I was only a fetus. Every day of my life was recorded in your book before one of them had taken place.” God not only knew you while you were being formed inside your mother, God had a plan and purpose for your life! It just makes you want to say, “Wow”! That’s how David continues.

“How precious are your thoughts concerning me, O God! How vast in number they are! If I try to count them, there would be more of them than there are grains of sand. When I wake up, I am still with you” (v.17-18). In other words, you are always in the thoughts of God! You have been from the
The very beginning of your life. God knows you because he was intimately involved in your formation. The reason God is always present in your life is because what he made is precious to him.

**The Comfort of Being Watched**

That brings us back to the idea that God is watching over you as your Creator, and not as “Big Brother.” Yes, he sees and knows everything you do and that’s not always good! But don’t be afraid! God has provided a means of forgiveness. His Son, Jesus, took our place from the very beginning. He, too, grew and developed in the womb of his mother, Mary. He lived a perfect life in our place. Then he took our sins upon himself and suffered and died in our place on the cross. He satisfied God’s justice and endured the punishment for sin for all people for all time—including you! Through faith in Jesus, whom God brought back to life from the dead, we are seen by God as holy and pure. Therefore, it’s not frightening to think about God knowing us and watching us. In fact, it is very comforting. He sees you as the work of his hands. He sees you as reclaimed by the outstretched hands of his Son. You are indeed precious to him! Wow!

**Facing a Terrible Reality**

Although Psalm 139 describes so amazingly God’s involvement in human life from the very beginning, it also provides a platform upon which to face a terrible reality. Not everyone sees the preciousness of human life in the womb. There are those who favor invading this “knitting room” of God and killing the life God creates there. Abortion has been around so long that many have become desensitized to what it really is and does. Even many Christians ask, “What’s so wrong with the right to choose?” Read on and see what defending the “right to choose” is really all about.

"DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE"

**Know the Facts**

**Introduction**

“I like pizza because pizza is my favorite food.” Defending the goodness of pizza requires a little more than this kind of statement! A successful defense of any subject requires knowledge of that subject beyond how you might feel about it.

Defending the phrase “a woman’s right to choose” requires knowledge. It requires knowledge of what is being chosen. Everyone knows that this phrase is not referring to a woman’s right to choose a new dress or new shoes. It refers to choosing an abortion. Defending the “right to choose” requires knowledge of abortion. The purpose of this article is to help people understand what defending the “right to choose” involves.

**Definition**

The word abortion comes from two Latin words, *ab* – *oriri*. *Ab* means “away from”; *oriri* means to “arise” or “appear.” *Aboriri*, therefore, means “away from appearing” or “disappear.” Abortion is often defined as the “termination of a pregnancy.” There are only two ways that a pregnancy can be terminated—the “appearing” of the child at birth or the “disappearing” of the child before birth. The choice of abortion causes the “disappearing” of an unborn child.

**Abortion Methods**

Defending the “right to choose” requires knowledge of how this “disappearing” takes place. The common methods used are listed below.

**Suction Abortion** The majority of all surgical abortions use this method. It is used during the first three months of pregnancy. A tube is inserted into the uterus. The tube is connected to a suction device 27 times more powerful than your home vacuum cleaner. The child and his or her placenta are sucked through this tube into a collection bottle. The remains are examined to insure all the parts are there.
Dilation and Curettage (D&C) This method is used between 10 and 12 weeks into the pregnancy when the child is getting too big to be suctioned through the tube. The cervix is dilated so that a long-handled instrument called a curette can be inserted. The curette with its looped cutting edge scrapes the placenta from the uterine wall and cuts the child into smaller pieces that can then be suctioned.

Dilation and Evacuation (D&E) As the child grows bigger, other methods are needed. In the D&E method, the cervix is dilated over a period of two or three days. A forceps is inserted and used to dismember the child one limb at a time and to extract each part. Finally, the head is crushed and removed. All parts are “reassembled” following the procedure to make sure the abortion is complete.

Dilation and Extraction (D&X or Partial-Birth) This method also requires up to three days for dilating the cervix. The abortionist guides the child feet first through the birth canal and allows all but the head to be delivered. Holding the head in place with one hand, the abortionist uses his other hand to puncture the base of the skull with a scissors-like instrument. A tube is inserted and the brains are suctioned out. The skull collapses and the now dead child is delivered.

RU-486 This chemical abortion method is for use during the first seven weeks of pregnancy. The woman takes the steroid, mifepristone, at her first visit to the abortionist. This disintegrates the uterine lining and causes the child to die. She returns 36 to 48 hours later and takes a second drug, misoprostol. She goes home and waits for this drug to cause contractions and expel the dead child. She must be examined 14 days later to be sure no portion of the child remains.

Abortion’s Scope and Reason

Defending the “right to choose” is defending abortion during all nine months of pregnancy for any reason. States may not restrict abortion if the mother’s life or health is threatened. The U.S. Supreme Court in Doe vs. Bolton legally defined health as “all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman’s age—relevant to the well-being of the patient. All these factors may relate to health.” In other words, defense of abortion is defending abortion for any reason. Most abortions are not done to end pregnancies that are the result of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother. Over 90 percent of abortions are performed because of one of the following reasons: a baby would interfere with work, school or other responsibilities, financial concerns, concerns about being a single parent, or problems with the father of the child.

Abortion and Teens Defending the “right to choose” is defending minors making life-changing decisions without parental involvement. In many states, minors do not need parental consent for an abortion. In most states where such consent is required, a judicial by-pass is often easily obtained.

Abortion and Life Defending the “right to choose” is defending the proposition that it is sometimes morally right to take an innocent human life. It’s a biological fact that a genetically unique human life begins at conception. The heart begins to beat at around 24 days. Brain waves can be recorded at 43 days. Movement begins at 45 days. By eight weeks every organ is present and functioning. The rest of the time in the womb is spent in further growth and development. It is important to know that it is not something that is killed in an abortion. It is someone.

Abortion’s Numbers Defending the “right to choose” is defending the death of someone at an unprecedented scale. Abortion is one of the most common surgical procedures in the United States. Over 3,000 are performed each day. More Americans die from abortion in one year than died in all the wars in which America has ever fought.

Abortion’s Other Someones Defending the “right to choose” is defending a choice that deeply affects those who make that choice. Abortion has physical, emotional, and spiritual affects on the
women and men involved. It is not as harmless and casual an event as many insist. Someone dies in an abortion. Someone else is deeply wounded.

**Conclusion and Final Fact**

You may like pizza because it is your favorite food, but defending a position requires more than expressing how you may feel about it. It requires knowledge of the facts. Defending something as controversial as “the right to choose” requires proper knowledge. This article has not been filled with extensive detailed data. Instead, it contains basic facts that everyone should know before defending abortion as a fundamental right.

There’s one more important fact to know. God put it this way, “There is a way that seems right to a person, but eventually it ends in death” (Proverbs 16:25). The “right to choose” may sound like a good and right thing to defend. But it is important to ask, “What is being chosen?” When the answer to that question is abortion, the “right to choose” leads to death. It leads to the death of a tiny, innocent human being. It leads to a brutal death. There is nothing “right” about such a way. There has to be another way.

There is! Jesus put it this way, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one goes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). When faced with a crisis pregnancy, there is a way other than death. It’s the way of life. It’s choosing life and trusting in the Lord of Life. Jesus, who is the way to eternal life, has also promised the presence of his Spirit in the living of this life. It is not a way where fear and heartache are absent. It is a way where the living Jesus is present and promises to be at work in every circumstance in your life. Rather than defending the “right to choose,” this way assuring that you are being defended. Jesus pleads your case before the Father seeking forgiveness for your mistakes based on the complete payment he made for all sins on the cross. He asks the Father to look at you through him and see his goodness covering you. He asks the Father to send the Spirit of comfort to walk beside you and turn your heartache into hope.

There is a way that seems right. It leads to death. There is a way that is right. It is where Jesus leads.

Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb
VALUING THE LIFE OF THE UNBORN CHILD
A Brief Study of Exodus 21:22-25

Following the giving of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17, God continues speaking to Moses giving some specific applications of these commands in a variety of settings. Exodus 21:12-32 deals with laws concerning various injuries inflicted upon people. Many situations are covered, everything from hitting parents to being gored by a bull. Within this context, verses 22-23 deal with injury to a pregnant woman and the child she carries.

Dead or Alive?
Not everyone would agree, however, that this text deals with an injury to a child. Some would argue that the injury to the pregnant woman described in verse 22 causes her to miscarry, that is, to deliver a dead child. Translations of the Bible that use the word “miscarriage” foster this interpretation. According to this view, the talk about injury that follows can only be applied to the woman since the child is dead. If the woman is not injured, this interpretation holds, a fine is leveled for causing the miscarriage. But if the woman is injured, then the penalty is in keeping with the nature of the injury—“life for a life, an eye for an eye,” etc. Thus, this understanding of the text gives more value to the life of the woman than the life of her unborn child. This leads to the conclusion that Scripture does not maintain the same value for unborn human life as it does for those already born. Such a conclusion is then used to justify the position that God does not condemn abortion.

However, if the injury to the woman does not cause a miscarriage but a premature birth, then we are dealing with a live baby. According to this view, the talk about injury that follows can be applied to either the woman or the baby. The penalty “life for a life, an eye for an eye,” etc. could refer to the baby as well as the woman. Thus, this view of the text gives the same value to the child as it does to the woman. Such a conclusion is then used to justify the position that God values all human life regardless of the stage of development and, therefore, he does condemn abortion.

The Language of the Text
The answer to which interpretation of this text is correct lies in the Hebrew words used in this verse. In other words, does the original Hebrew point to a miscarriage or to a premature birth? The Hebrew words translated “miscarriage” or, as here, “gives birth prematurely,” could literally be translated, “the child comes forth.” “Child” (Hebrew yeled) is variously translated as child, young man, young ones, sons, or boy. Thus, it is used of born and living children.

The Hebrew word translated “comes forth” (yasa) is used often in the Old Testament to show how a variety of things “come forth” or “come out” or “depart.” Frequently it is used of giving birth. For example, in Genesis 25:25-26 the birth of Esau and Jacob is detailed: “The first one was born [yasa] red.” “Afterwards, his brother was born [yasa].” Jeremiah 1:5 reads: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born [yasa], I set you apart for my holy purpose. I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.”

This point is significant. “Yasa,” in over 1,000 uses in the Old Testament portion of the Bible, is never used to describe what we would think of as a miscarriage. Indeed, it describes just the opposite. To translate it otherwise is, therefore, suspect. In addition, there are other Hebrew words that the prophet could have used that are more specific in their meaning when it comes to describing miscarriage. For example, “No woman in your land will miscarry [sakal] or be unable to have children. I will let you live a normal life span” (Exodus 23:26).

Conclusions
It seems then that the focus of this text is to set forth regulations regarding what happens when a pregnant woman is injured and gives birth prematurely to a living child. First, “if there are no other injuries” other than what caused the premature delivery, a fine will be leveled against the one causing this injury. In other words, if both mother and child are deemed unharmed after the initial cause of this unplanned delivery, then the punishment is a fine to compensate for the original injury and any extra care a premature child might need.
However, this regulation also allows for punishment if there are other injuries. Since we have established that there is a mother and a child involved, the translation in verse 23 of “If anyone is injured” is appropriate. In this situation, further injury could be incurred by mother and/or the child. In the course of this unexpected and premature birth, there could be harm to the mother or the child during the delivery. Either or both could lose their lives. The punishment detailed in verses 23b – 25 takes this into account with the formula, “A life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, a burn for a burn, a bruise for a bruise, a wound for a wound.”

This means that if the mother dies as a result of the premature birth of her child, the offender must give his life. The punishment shows that God values the life of the mother. It takes us back to God’s words to Noah after the flood: “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, because in the image of God, God made humans” (Genesis 9:6).

The punishment formula “a life for a life” applies to the child as well. If the child dies because of this premature birth, the offender must give his life. This text shows clearly that God places the same value on the life of the child as he does the life of the mother and as he does every human life. Therefore, this text cannot be properly used to support the view that unborn human life has less value than born human life. This text cannot be properly used to support abortion.

Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb
YOU HAVE UNEARNED MORAL WORTH

The Ethic
The sanctity of life ethic, also known as the equality of life ethic, is the fundamental pillar upon which Western Civilization rests. It was the underlying source from which so much freedom has sprung over the last two thousand years. It is so fundamental to our values, our laws, and our mutual cohesiveness as a society that I call it The Ethic.

For some, The Ethic is expressively a fundamentally religious value. And, indeed, there is no doubt that advocacy for human equality is most vigorously promoted in Judeo/Christian theology and philosophy. For example, in the book of Leviticus 19:18, God commands Jews to “love your neighbor as you love yourself”—a radical concept now as it was then. In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus expanded the concept of “neighbor” beyond one’s own group and applied it to everyone, even outcasts, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Two thousand years ago, a time when a good Jew would never enter a gentile’s home, when slavery was unremarkable, and when wives could be killed by husbands under Roman law without consequence, these words of universal human equality from the Apostle Paul to the Galatians (3:28) were breathtakingly radical: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

“We hold these truths to be self evident,” the deist and rationalist Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1776, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Absorb the message of what may be the single most influential sentence ever written: self-evident truths; all humans created equal; inalienable rights. Has there ever been a more stirring and eloquent celebration of The Ethic?

The Ethic possesses a very simple to state, hard to apply, but infinitely profound wisdom: that each human life has equal inherent moral worth. None of us are better or worse, superior or inferior, more valuable or less valuable, for being a woman or a man, black or white or yellow or brown or red, young or old, weak or strong, sick or well, disabled or able-bodied, decrepit or robust, and pro-lifers would emphatically add, born or unborn. The Ethic cuts through the false dualities and multiplicities that divide us from each other and recognizes one organic whole: humankind.

The Ethic Rejected
But some don’t see it that way. Increasingly, bioethicists, such as Princeton University’s Peter Singer, assert that being human is irrelevant to moral worth. What matters morally is whether an individual—be it human or animal—is a “person,” a category that must be earned by possessing sufficient cognitive capacities such as being self-aware over time. Individuals that fail to pass the test are denigrated as “non-persons” and lose the right to life, perhaps even the right to bodily integrity.

So, who are the so-called human “non-persons”? All unborn human life, surely, since embryos and fetuses are not conscious. This means, among other consequences, that embryos and perhaps fetuses can be harvested as if they were nothing more valuable than a corn crop. Indeed, that is precisely what occurs in embryonic stem cell research. Advocates of therapeutic cloning even assert that it should be permissible to create new human life by cloning with the purpose of researching upon and destroying it. Personhood theory’s war against the unborn is so radical that New Jersey passed a law in 2004 permitting human cloning, implantation, and gestation through the ninth month—only requiring that the cloned fetus be destroyed just before birth.

If unborn life is reduced to the status of penicillin mold, what about born humans with severed cognitive impairments? Surely, personhood theory would not similarly victimize these helpless humans.

Oh, yes it would! For several years, bioethicists and organ transplant professionals have advocated that a diagnosis of permanent coma be redefined as “death” to permit organ harvesting from the comatose. Some advocates go even farther. An article published in 2003 in the prestigious medical
journal *Critical Care Medicine* urged that the “neurologically devastated” and “imminently dying” be permitted to be killed for their organs, assuming family consent.

**The Essential Question**

The essential question of our time is whether life has ultimate value simply and merely because it is human. Adherents to The Ethic, say yes. Advocates of placing a relative value for humans based on subjective criteria say no. How we answer this question as a society will do more than almost any other factor in determining the morality of the twenty-first century.

Wesley J. Smith
WHEN DOES LIFE BEGIN?
A Brief Study of Psalm 51:5

“In deed, I was born guilty.” (Literally, “Behold, in iniquity I was writhed out.”)

The word “indeed” means to call our attention to a special point. It has the purpose of furthering what David asserted at the end of the previous verse, that God has every right to label him a sinner. We could get at the sense of this word by paraphrasing it in English as, “If you want to get to the real fact of the matter.” In other words verse 5 is a further and more compelling truth than David set forth in verses 4-5a.

When the verse reads, “I was born guilty,” it really is paraphrasing the Hebrew which is very hard to translate directly into English. In the Hebrew David is the subject of a verb that describes his mother “writhing” in labor pains. There is not, of course, any English verb like “writhed out,” but with this made-up verb I was trying to show what the Hebrew is saying.

The word translated “guilty” means sin in the aspect of something that incurs guilt and demands punishment. In the Hebrew it is not clear from the sentence whether the guilt is that of David or of his mother. GOD’S WORD® solves the problem for us by phrasing it in such a way that it is clear that David is referring to his own sin. We can agree with this understanding. David is not describing something sinful about the way his mother gave birth to him. Throughout the psalm he is speaking of his own sin. Yet the way David describes his birth, focusing on his mother writhing in pain as she gave birth to him, reminds us of the painful consequences of sin that the LORD revealed to Eve in Genesis 3:16: “I will increase your pain and your labor when you give birth to children.” The writhing of David’s mother in giving birth to him reminds him that she was sinful, and that she passed this sinful human nature on to him as well.

“I was a sinner when my mother conceived me.” (Literally, “in sin my mother went into heat for me.”)

Here David uses a different Hebrew word for sin. It means to miss the mark, to be off target. It is the general, most common Hebrew word for sin.

If we thought that David was less than dignified when he described his mother as writhing in pain when she gave birth to him, the verb he uses here is downright crass. David’s choice of words is not the usual word used in the Bible for pregnant. This word actually means to become hot, and is almost identical to our phrase, “to go into heat.” We use this phrase to describe the reproductive cycle of female animals. And the Bible does the same. This is a rare word in Biblical Hebrew. It is only used five times. All the other times are in Genesis 30-31 where the subjects are Jacob’s sheep conceiving offspring.

Here is the only place that the word is used of a human being, and it can hardly be meant to be complimentary. Instead of the focus being on intercourse as a thoughtful act of human love which results in a child’s amazing conception, it is debased to mere animal sex drive. It almost reduces that act by which David’s mother became pregnant to a pornographic, thoughtless act of sex for sex’s sake. This is not a pretty picture. David hardly could have made his point that he is a sinful man born of sinful parents any more vividly.

This psalm like all the psalms is Hebrew poetry. The chief characteristic of such poetry is a mechanism called parallelism. This means that in each verse, or perhaps in two verses together, two sentences stand in a parallel arrangement to each other. Often the structure of each sentence is the same as its parallel. You can see this in our verse. There are three types of parallelism identified by scholars of the Old Testament:

ANTITHETICAL (the two clauses say opposite things)

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.
Stubborn fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Proverbs 1:7).
SYNONYMOUS (the two clauses say the same thing, usually in different words)
“Wash me thoroughly from my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:2).

PROGRESSIVE (the second clause completes the thought of the first)
“Righteous people will see this and be struck with fear; They will laugh at you and say,” (Psalm 52:6).

The question is which type of parallelism do we have here? Obviously, it is not antithetical. But are the two clauses just saying the same thing, or is David adding to and completing his thought with the second clause. If we say that the clauses are saying the same thing in different words, David is saying that conception and birth are all part of one great nine-month event. Whether you mention birth or conception makes no difference. They are just looking at the beginning or the end of the same thing. We could understand David that way. At the same time we can understand this verse as expressing progressive parallelism. When David mentions conception, he is adding to and making his thought more complete than it was before.

The last thing we wish to look at in this verse is the arrangement of the verse. It seems a little strange. Why would David speak of his birth in the first clause and then his conception in the second? According to the natural order of things it ought to be the other way around. However, David seems to be telling us something with this order. The place where he is standing as he writes the psalm is at the point of confessing his great sins of adultery and murder. He is saying that the LORD is absolutely right to label him a sinner. These great sinful acts prove it. But, in fact, his sinfulness goes far deeper than just outward acts that break God's holy will. His whole being is racked with sin. He is sinful by nature, and as such, is under God's judgment and is what Paul calls an object of “[God's] anger.” (See Ephesians 2:3.) Now David is saying that this has been the case from the very beginning of his existence. When was that? David looks back. The first milestone of his early existence he comes to going backwards from where he is at is his birth. But he says that he can go back farther yet. He can go all the way back to his conception, the very time when he came into being as an individual separate from his mother and father. That was the time of his conception. David seems to be completing his thought with the final clause, going back as far as he possibly can go. At that time already he was a human being, answerable to God for his sinfulness and in need of the LORD's unfailing love and compassion.

When does human life begin? This passage teaches the doctrine of original sin. As such, if David's guilt before God began at conception, then that is the time when he became an individual human being. In other words, a person's existence begins at conception.

Professor James Westendorf