

Abortion: A Fundamental Moral Issue in Society

by Josh Hennig, Lutheran High, Springfield, Illinois
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Forty, this is a significant number in biblical history. It rained and poured for forty days and nights during the Flood. Jesus spent forty days in the desert being tempted by Satan. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness forty years before entering the Promised Land. For forty years our nation has felt the sting of sin and the stench of death as millions of innocent lives have been lost due to the legalization of abortion in 1973. Though abortion has been around since sin entered the world, in these past forty years it has become an issue of much moral, political, and ethical debate. Respect for human life is a foundational principle for individuals living together harmoniously in society. (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 3) When that respect is lost then society begins to break apart. Abortion is one of the fundamental moral issues in society today as it devalues life as created by God which then affects other ethical issues.

All life has been created by God. Genesis 1:27-28 says, "So God created man in his own image ... And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.'" God intends for us to be good stewards of His creation and deal with everything in a God-pleasing manner. This includes standing up to the fact that human life begins at conception and that all human life has value. Jeremiah 1:5 says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." At the moment that a child is conceived all of the genetic information is present that will make up the fully developed human being. (Take My Hand, Not My Life)

All life has value. St. Paul writes in Galatians 1:15, "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace ..." God has a plan for every one of His created children and we are all special in our own ways and individually loved by God. According to the President's Commission on the Sanctity of Life of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, "No one is worthless whom God has created and for whom Christ died." (Lutheran Church Missouri Synod,5)

Abortion devalues human life. Since the legalization of abortion in 1973, approximately 56.5 million abortions have occurred in the United States. On average one baby dies every twenty-three seconds in the United States. Since 1980 approximately 1.3 billion abortions have occurred worldwide. (Number of Abortions- Abortion Counters) Even cattle in slaughterhouses have more legal rights than unborn babies. It is only legally humane to kill animals if, "All animals are rendered insensible to pain by a single blow." (National Right to Life Educational Trust Fund) When looking at laws about the pain in butchering animals you would think that there would be laws protecting babies from pain in abortions, but this is not the case. Some people say that babies are not able to feel pain or that the anesthesia given to the mother will keep the child from feeling pain. However, anesthesia given to the mother has no effect on the child. (Partial-Birth Abortions: An Eyewitness Account) By the fourth week of development the baby has already developed pain receptors and nerve fibers. (What does a baby feel during an abortion?) Also, the mechanisms that inhibit feeling pain do not develop until around weeks thirty to thirty-two, and as a result any pain felt before this is most likely worse than the pain felt by older children and adults. (National Right to Life Educational Trust Fund)

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In D and E abortions that occur around week twenty-four, the doctor takes a sharp forceps and literally rips chunks of the baby out of the mother. In instillation abortions up to one cup of amniotic fluid is replaced with a concentrated salt solution which burns the skin of the baby and is inhaled, and this can last up to an hour before the child dies. In neither type of abortion does the baby receive any anesthesia. (National Right to Life Educational Trust Fund) Nothing is as devaluing to human life than subjecting these innocent children to this kind of barbaric torture.

This societal acceptance of abortion leads to other bioethical issues. Genetic testing of babies that leads to the abortion of those who are mentally handicapped sends the message that handicapped people are worthless to society. It also shows how America is approving of violent methods for those who are too weak to compete for rights such as the young, elderly, dying, and handicapped. Abortion teaches children that it is an acceptable way to deal with the “inconvenient.” (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,3) “Abortion has not only led to the shocking loss of 1.3 million lives each year, it has also resulted in a coarsened society, desensitized to death and disloyal to life.” (Lutheran Church Missouri Synod) This “desensitization to death” is clearly evident in the fact that four states now have some legalization of physician-assisted suicide. (pro.con.org)

The acceptance of abortion has also paved the way for the use of embryos for scientific research. Cells extracted from human embryos and aborted fetuses are used for stem cell research. The use of human embryos for stem cell research “takes not only the life of a human being, but also demeans and dehumanizes the meaning of ‘child’ given to a husband and wife as a blessing and gift from the Lord. It defines the meaning of human life in terms of outcomes/best interest, not in terms of gift/preservation of life.” (Concordia Seminary) The societal acceptance of abortion as an option to end an unwanted pregnancy makes it easier to accept disposing of embryos for other purposes even to the point that some may justify an abortion so that the tissue can be used for some “good”.

Another area that encompasses a similar issue is in the use of certain reproductive technologies. In vitro fertilization is one of the most commonly used artificial methods of conceiving a child. The process involves fertilizing a man’s sperm and a woman’s egg in a petri dish. In the laboratory the resultant embryos may be graded regarding their ability to implant. Only those that look viable may be kept. Usually, no more than three embryos are placed into a woman’s uterus at one time. The others are frozen in liquid nitrogen. (Weise, 25-26) What becomes of these human lives? Are some killed simply because they are not deemed “viable”?

Societal acceptance of abortion is connected to a denial of a Creator God. We see that as soon as people reject the idea of a Creator God then abortion becomes an acceptable practice because there is nothing special with one life over another. This is closely tied to evolutionary thinking because as soon as the idea of God is gone then man puts in what his version of truth should be. This kind of thinking can be applied to anything as *Answers in Genesis* founder, Ken Ham states, “Once we take away the Bible as the foundation for our thinking and replace this foundation with human opinion, then

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whatever the majority of people consider legitimate becomes acceptable to society as a whole.” (Ham) People’s thinking goes from being God-centered to a thinking of secular humanism which replaces religious values with human values based on “humanistic assumptions”. (Veith, 71)

Abortion is a fundamental moral issue of society. Just because abortion is legal does not make it moral, ethical, or right. Even though abortion is legal, it is very much against the will of God. Acts 5:29 says, “We must obey God rather than men.” (Barry) Our country was built on the principles of freedom and equality, but the “debate regarding abortion and other life issues is a debate on the very nature and the future of our American society. Is the gate of mercy shut and locked?” (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 7) Also in cases where the parents claim to have the freedom to choose to have an abortion, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s President’s Commission on the Sanctity of Life has a response. “When a life is unjustly taken, this is not an expression of freedom or choice. It is the abuse of freedom and choice, and the permanent denial of freedom and choice to the individual who no longer lives.” (Lutheran Church Missouri Synod,7)

Within the past forty years abortion has become one of the fundamental moral issues in our society as it devalues life as created by God. When members of society deny that life is created by God and that their human wants and desires are more important than moral absolutes, then human life has lost its individual value. This affects decisions that are made regarding other life issues such as euthanasia, the use of embryos for scientific research, and the destruction of embryos used in artificial reproductive techniques. God’s Word is clear. Every human life has value as created and redeemed by God through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.