

Old New Questions (7): Can Christians Be Pro-Choice?

(Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

I. Call to Worship

- A. LaGard Smith tells of attending a debate at Oxford on topic of abortion
 - 1. Just as arguments were getting intense, a baby in the back started to cry.
 - a. People, of course, turned to glare at the baby and embarrassed mother.
 - b. You know the look that people sometimes give crying babies in church!
 - 2. Smith said that this moment captured the essence of the abortion debate
 - a. Here adults were intent on adult things, and a baby was getting in way
 - b. Smith talked with the baby's parents; her name was **Chaya** (Heb, "life")
 - c. So **life** that had interrupted the discussion; **life** had gotten in the way
- B. Moses challenged Israel to choose between life and death (**Deut 30:19-20**)
 - 1. That sums up what we'll talk about later in the sermon, "*Now choose life*"
 - 2. The songs we will sing stress our life in God—our life now and forever

II. Introduction: Abortion as Issue

- A. During the past election, the topic of abortion was at forefront of debate
 - 1. This made the election exactly like every other election in recent memory!
 - a. Tough vote for Catholics; VP Joe Biden is both Catholic & pro-choice
 - b. Catholic priest said he'd withhold communion to those voting for Obama
Voting for a pro-abortion politician when a pro-life alternative exists constitutes material cooperation with intrinsic evil and places one outside of communion of Christ's Church
 - 2. Many preachers said the same thing—can't vote for pro-choice candidate
- B. The problem with political debates is they are so political... and so debatable
 - 1. One conservative Christian wrote of his struggle with voting this year
 - a. His faith led him to be pro-life... and anti-war, pro-marriage, pro-poor
 - b. He was "*pro-life from womb to tomb.*" How to vote for all of those.
 - 2. To discuss "*pro-life*" vs "*pro-choice*" usually implies a political issue
 - a. Abortion is a matter of ethics and morality, but the issue part is politics
 - b. People don't stand with signs to announce their private moral choice
 - 1) We've been looking at old/new questions, today's is about abortion
 - 2) The way I've chosen to frame it, "*Can a Christian vote pro-choice?*"

III. The Bible and Abortion

- A. The Bible sees children as gifts from God Himself ([Psalm 127:3-4](#), NLT).
1. Babies were seen as precious treasure from God to make life better
 - a. They weren't seen as inconveniences or hardship to life or lifestyle.
 - 1) Women in scripture are very unhappy when they can have children
 - 2) Rachel told Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die" ([Gen 30:1](#))
 - b. Idea of terminating a pregnancy in the Jewish culture was unthinkable.
 2. But that is not to say that abortion was not possible in Biblical times
 - a. Abortions were made through surgery, potions, tight waistbands, etc
 - b. In Greco-Roman world, a child wasn't fully human until week **after** birth
 - c. Roman law made no distinction in abortion and infanticide (*exposure*)
 3. Though common in pagan world, Jews and Christian saw abortion as sin
- B. Why? While scripture doesn't mention abortion, it does address the unborn
1. **First**, babies in the womb are the result of the creative process of God.
 - a. The sanctity of life begins in creation; we are made in image of God
 - b. Creation didn't end in Eden; that same creative process extends to womb
 - 1) God's creative process and presence is before birth ([Psa 139:13-16](#)).
 - 2) God creates people within the wombs of their mothers ([Job 31:15](#)).
 - 3) Jeremiah's origin and call were prior to conception ([Jer. 1:4-5](#)).
 - c. God is sovereign over creation; He creates us as He did Adam and Eve
 - d. And it is in the womb that this creative power and process takes place
 2. **Second**, the Bible calls the unborn within the womb "*babies*."
 - a. We show our recognition of unborn life by the language that they use.
 - b. We them "*babies*" (Not "*Fetus kicked!*" or "*Is your fetus a boy or girl?*")
 - 1) Randy Alcorn tells of irony of a poster displayed at a pro-choice rally
 - 2) The sign said, "*My baby, My body, My business*" So it's a baby!
 - c. That's precisely the language the Bible uses for referring to the unborn.
 - 1) Greek word for "*baby*" (*brephos*) used for unborn ([Luke 1: 41, 2:12](#))
 - 2) Hebrew word for "*baby*" also applied to a child *in utero* ([Gen 25:22](#))
 3. Babies in the womb are the creation of God... and they are called babies

- C. Human development in the womb is just that—a process of development
1. Much of that takes place in first month (*before Mom is sure he/she is there*)
 - a. At conception, a unique genetic code is created (sex, eye color, hair color)
 - b. By 10 days, child produces an enzyme that stops Mom's menstrual cycle.
 - c. At 18 days, the heart begins; 21 days, blood circulates in closed system.
 2. In 2nd month, there are measurable brain waves and movement (*quickenings*)
 - a. The baby is now clearly a baby—fingers and toes, mouth, lips, etc
 - b. By the 9th week, baby has unique fingerprints and functioning kidneys
 3. By 12th wk (end of 1st trimester), all organ systems are present & functional
 - a. Lungs pump, throat swallows, stomach digests and bladder urinates
 - b. The baby sleeps and wakes, tastes, hears, and feels pain (*to some degree*)
 4. By the 16th wk, nose, lips and ears look like a nose, lips and ears.
 - a. At 18 wks, baby sucks its thumb and goes through motions of crying.
 - b. At 20 wks, (halfway), the baby can survive (*some aborted babies have*)
- D. We variously use words like zygote, blastula, embryo, fetus and neonate
1. All of these medical terms simply describe different points along process
 - a. As we saw, the Bible uses only one term pre-and-postnatal—a baby
 - b. Books/sites explaining fetal development say, “*You baby can now...*”
 2. When does this zygote-embryo-fetus become human? *When is ensoulment?*
 - a. **Implantation:** Some see this as necessary in like of frozen embryos
 - b. **Quickening:** That is when mother feels movement; moved all along
 - c. **Viability:** That describes advance of science, nothing about baby
 - d. **First Breath:** Difference just before and after birth is only location.
 3. But these are observable, quantifiable stages in a process of development
 - a. When does this new gradually maturing being actually become human
 - b. There's only one phenomenal, cataclysmic event in process—**conception**
- E. Can we prove without doubt that soul and personhood begin at conception?
1. There will never be ultrasound that can show us either soul or personhood
 2. We can know that God and Scripture treat babes as babies before birth!
 3. The lack of a definitive text or test will always make this debate a debate

IV. Conclusion

- A. We need to avoid making complex issue simplistic; both sides have done that
 1. Preacher who is pro-life and counsels those who are unable to conceive
 - a. **Dilemma:** Some couples can't have children except through IVF
 - b. But IVF creates more embryos than can be implanted (unless Octomom)
 2. So he wonders if the Jewish concept of "*breath of life*" may help
 3. It is one thing to be pro-life; it's another to make complex issue simplistic
- B. In movie *Cabaret*, Liza Minnelli plays Sally, nightclub singer who is pregnant.
 1. She decides to have an abortion, but then she begins to have 2nd thoughts.
 - a. She asks her friend, "*Babies love you automatically, don't they?*"
 - b. Friend says, "*They don't really have much choice.*" That hits Sally hard *If babies love you automatically, then how can you not love them automatically?*"
 2. Later, her friend is surprised to learn Sally went ahead and had the abortion
 - a. When asked why, Sally gives what could be the creed of pro-choice *It hurts, but not as much as the reality. On the one side is a baby who loves you automatically, but on the other side is me.*
 - b. On one side there is life; on the other side is choice. "*Now choose life!*"
- C. We might as well end with some suggests (*just in case I'm not in trouble yet*)
 1. **First**, vote you conscience, but this issue will never be solved by voting
 - a. The problem with this issue is that it became an issue... only two sides
 - b. That puts both sides into defending nutty positions they'd rather not
 - 1) Why defend partial birth abortion? Or oppose all stem cell research?
 - 2) Have to! If they don't, you loose ground to the enemy in the debate!
 - c. It's better to reduce abortions than try to outlaw all of them... and fail
 2. **Second**, church has to preach personal responsibility and holy choices
 - a. We do have control over our bodies; use it and abortion won't matter!
 - b. Like gay marriage and co-habitat. Abortion may be legal, but it is sin
 3. **Third**, church also needs to offer alternatives, support and grace to women
 - a. I don't think it is pro-life to shout condemnation without help (**Jam 2:16**)
 - b. Someone who (despite view) offers help to unwed mother, that's pro-life
 4. **Fourth**, we have only the answer for sin! *Bring your guilt to the cross.*