

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

January 24, 2010

THEME:

Abortion and the fundamental right to life

GOAL:

To increase understanding and awareness of the development of the unborn child and facilitate dialog about legal abortion and the need to defend protect and value innocent human life

CONCEPTS:

1. The humanity of the unborn child is demonstrated in all stages of development
2. Abortion takes several forms and ends the life of the unborn child at any stage of development
3. Abortion raises serious moral questions

The scripture teaches that human life is sacred. The intrinsic value of human life comes from the creator of life, God. The fundamental right to life recognizes that we are created in the image of God and are called to defend, protect and value innocent human life.

Recognition of the sanctity of human life is a foundation which provides guidance regarding how we treat others. How should we as Christians respond to legal abortion?

This discussion guide will provide both biological and biblical information regarding the development of human life; scripture references to review regarding the value of life; and discussion questions which allow for the exploration of defending, protecting and valuing innocent human life.

How do we know that unborn children are living human beings? Science tells us so.

The scientific field of embryology clearly shows that at fertilization, when a sperm fertilizes an ovum (also known as conception), the life of a human being begins. Embryology textbooks recognize this scientific fact.

“Although human life is a continuous process, fertilization is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is thereby formed. ... The combination of 23 chromosomes present in each pronucleus results in 46 chromosomes in the zygote. Thus the diploid number is restored and the embryonic genome is formed. The embryo now exists as a genetic unity.” - O’Rahilly, Ronan and Müller, Fabiola. Human Embryology and Teratology, 2nd edition. New York: Wiley-Liss, 1996, pp. 8, 29

“Fertilization is a sequence of events that begins with the contact of a sperm (spermatozoon) with a secondary oocyte (ovum) and ends with the fusion of their pronuclei (the haploid nuclei of the sperm and ovum) and the mingling of their chromosomes to form a new cell. This fertilized ovum, known as a zygote, is a large diploid cell that is the beginning, or primordium, of a human being.” - Moore, Keith L. Essentials of Human Embryology. Toronto: B.C. Decker Inc, 1988, p.2

“The development of a human being begins with fertilization, a process by which two highly specialized cells, the spermatozoon from the male and the oocyte from the female, unite to give rise to a new organism, the zygote.” - Langman, Jan. Medical Embryology. 3rd edition. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1975, p. 3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

If embryology textbooks clearly teach that life begins at fertilization, why is this belief so often treated as if it were based solely on religious beliefs?

From reading the newspaper or watching television, can you identify examples of when human life has not been respected?

Examples include:

- violence against others
- violence against the property of others
- decisions which show lack of character which negatively impacts others

What are some underlying causes which lead people to fail to respect the lives of other humans?

How do we know that we should value human life? The Bible tells us so.

GOD IS THE CREATOR OF LIFE

Psalm 139:13-16

- ¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
¹⁶ your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Isaiah 44:24

"This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb:
I am the LORD,
who has made all things,
who alone stretched out the heavens,
who spread out the earth by myself,"

CHILDREN ARE A GIFT FROM GOD

Psalm 127:3

"Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him."

HUMANS ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Genesis 1:27

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Whom does the Bible call us to help and protect?

Throughout scripture God's people are called on to help and protect the defenseless and those who couldn't protect themselves such as the widow, the alien, and the fatherless (Exodus 22:22, Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17, 24:19, 24:20, 24:21, 26:12, Psalms 68:5, 82:3, 146:9, Proverbs 15:25, 23:10, Isaiah 1:17, Jeremiah 7:6, 22:3 and Zechariah 7:10). The prophets, the law and Jesus rebuke those who take advantage of those who couldn't defend themselves (Deuteronomy 27:19, Psalms 94:6, Isaiah 1:23, 10:2, Jeremiah 5:28, Ezekiel 22:7, Malachi 3:5, Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47). I John 3:17 shows that we are called to protect and help those in need. Throughout the gospels we see Jesus continually reach out to those in Jewish society who were seen as insignificant like the poor, the sick, lepers, sinners, the blind, etc.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Ask for volunteers to look up some of the verses on the previous page and read them out loud.

Why would widows, the fatherless and aliens need to be protected from being mistreated in Israel's society?

In our society, who is more defenseless than an unborn child? Who has less rights than a child who has yet to be born?

Who are some other members of our human family (besides the unborn) who need to be protected?

How many people knew how "health" was defined with regards to abortion?

Why does Sanctity of Human Life Sunday take place in January?

Thirty-seven years ago on January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court in two separate decisions (*Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*), overruled laws dealing with abortion in all 50 states and ruled that states couldn't restrict the legality of abortion in the first six months of pregnancy and could only restrict abortion in the last three months of pregnancy as long as there were exemptions for the woman's life and **health**. *Doe v. Bolton* then defined "health" in such broad terms as to make it virtually impossible for a state to protect the unborn child even after the sixth month of pregnancy. (*Doe v. Bolton*, 410 U.S. 179 stated . . . "the medical judgment may be exercised in the light of 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.")

Is our society currently valuing the lives of unborn human beings?

In 2005, it is estimated by the Alan Guttmacher Institute that 1.21 million abortions took place in the United States. That's 3,315 abortions every day; 138 abortions every hour; and 2.3 abortions every minute. Every minute, every hour, and every day for an entire year.

Approximately 50 million abortions have occurred in the United States since 1973.

To provide an idea of how many 50 million abortions is, the combined populations of Wyoming, Vermont, North Dakota, Alaska, South Dakota, Delaware, Montana, Rhode Island, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Maine, Idaho, Nebraska, West Virginia, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Kansas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Iowa, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Oregon and Kentucky equal approximately 50 million. That's 25 states.

Clearly, our society is not placing enough value on the lives of unborn human beings. Whether individuals incorrectly think they are not living human beings or go ahead with abortions despite recognizing the humanity of unborn, abortion is a violent act which occurs far too often in our society.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What can we do as individuals, families and as a church to help our society value human life in all its stages?

Time for brainstorming and discussion.

An Alan Guttmacher survey found that 78% of women obtaining abortions reported a religious affiliation. How can we best value human life while at the same time avoid condemning women who have had abortions?

Time for brainstorming and discussion.

What message do we send when we don't discuss issues like abortion?

Time for brainstorm and discussion.



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