The Abortion Quagmire

Two unmarried teenagers agonize about the girl’s pregnancy. Afraid to confide in their families, the couple manages to deliver the baby in a motel room. They wrap the newborn in plastic and throw her in a trash bin. They are convicted of manslaughter, if they had procured an abortion just a few weeks—or even a few days—earlier, they would not have faced a trial and jail terms. This is just one of hundreds of news stories appearing over the past few years in a nation mired in the moral quagmire of abortion.

by Gary Petty

S
ince the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision in 1973, the abortion issue in the United States has been a politically hot potato polarized into two camps: pro-choice and pro-life. Fundamentally, pro-choice proponents claim that a woman has the right to determine what happens inside her own body, including the right to destroy an embryo. Pro-lifers make their stand on the rights of the unborn child as a human being. Both sides claim that their respective platforms rest on an ethical foundation of basic human rights. Legislation on this issue often takes the so-called middle ground: that abortion can be legally sanctioned in early pregnancy but forbidden after a specified number of weeks of development of the fetus in the mother’s womb.

The stakes are high. All, the line between murder—the unlawful taking of a human life—and legal abortion hinges on the question of when human life begins.

Debate over when life begins

The arguments center on the criteria that determine when an embryo or fetus can be called human. Most pro-lifers claim human life begins at conception. Many pro-choice proponents claim that abortion is acceptable only in early stages of pregnancy. Some argue that human life begins with brain activity, while others claim that abortions should be legal during any stage of pregnancy. This last position has led some pro-lifers to suggest that human life begins after a specified number of weeks of development of the fetus in the mother’s womb.

The question is vital to the more than 3,000 babies who will be aborted in the United States in the next 24 hours. Debate over when life begins is a central issue in the debate of the right to life versus the right to choose. The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in the case of Roe vs. Wade fundamentally changed American society. A 1998 U.S. News & World Report article concluded that, at current rates, more than four in 10 American women may have an abortion in their lifetime.

“The statistic is astonishing: 43 percent of American women will have an abortion in their lifetime, if current rates are sustained” (Steven Waldman, Elise Ackerman and Rita Rubin, “Abortions in America,” U.S. News & World Report, Jan. 19, 1998).

When does life begin?

At conception a sperm impregnates an egg about the size of the period at the end of this sentence. Growth and development are immediate and remarkable. The new life has a heartbeat around the age of 18 days. At around three weeks, usually even before the mother knows she’s pregnant, what determines the point when an embryo or fetus is no longer considered mere tissue but a distinct life with the moral right to live? The question is vital to the more than 3,000 babies who will be aborted in the United States in the next 24 hours. The ripple effect of Roe vs. Wade has dramatically changed American society. A 1998 U.S. News & World Report article concluded that, at current rates, more than four in 10 American women may have an abortion in their lifetime.

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The ultimate solution

God will send Jesus Christ back to earth to establish His Kingdom, to build a new world governed by a higher law. He will create an environment of peace and harmony, a world that is safe for children. It will be a world safe for the unborn. The prophet Zechariah was inspired to write of this time when the Messiah will reign: “Old men and old women shall sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets” (Zechariah 8:4-5).

Pray for that day.

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in the case of Roe vs. Wade overrode all state laws. But the court stated that it could not resolve the difficult problem of when an unborn child becomes a human person. Thus the court’s decision was to err on the side of taking life rather than saving it.

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Is it a legal or religious matter?

Pro-abortion factions argue that abortion is a personal, voluntary action of those who have decided to have children. They argue that the decision to have an abortion is a matter of individual choice and that women should be allowed to make that decision without interference from the government. On the other hand, pro-life factions argue that abortion is a moral and religious issue that should be regulated by the government. They believe that abortion is a violation of the sanctity of human life and that it is an evil that should be punished.

Are abortions legal in your country?

The legality of abortion varies from country to country. In some countries, abortion is legal and widely practiced, while in others, it is illegal and considered a criminal offense. In the United States, abortion is legal, but the process is regulated by state laws.

Is it legal or religious matter?

Some people believe that abortion is a legal matter, while others believe that it is a religious matter. The issue is complex, and there are many different perspectives on the matter.
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They invent new kinds of vice, they show no respect to parents, they are without sense or fidelity, without natural affection or pity. They know well enough the just cause for which we fight, and do these things themselves but approve such conduct in others (Romans 1:28-32, Revised English Bible, emphasis added).

The act of terminating the life of an unborn child doesn’t proceed out of a vacuum. Abortion is a symptom. Along with divorces, broken homes, mental anguish and the physical suffering of venerable diseases, abortion is one of many symptoms of a society that has a selfish, misguided and even perverted view of the sexual relationship. God Himself designed for human reproduction, which God meant for human beings to enjoy as an expression of love within the bounds of marriage.

Every effect has a cause. The cause of growing societal tragedies is our willful disregard of our Creator’s instructions, given for our good (to better understand their benefits, be sure to request your free copy of The Ten Commandments). The healing solution is to return to marriage as the only acceptable environment for a sexual relationship and conception of children.

What if I’ve had an abortion?

Many women suffer emotional scars from having an abortion. Describe wakings and at night hearing a baby cry. They experience pangs of guilt when seeing a mother playing with her child and sometimes fear that God won’t forgive them.

It’s easy to fall into the trap that our sins are so terrible that even a merciful God won’t forgive us. Paul writes that God forgives even though “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), but often it is easier to apply such statements to others.

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Report, January 19, 1998, p. 18. The healing solution is to return to marriage as the only acceptable environment for a sexual relationship and conception of children. A healthy family is a beautiful expression of the love of two people committed to each other in a lifelong relationship. The children of this union are a blessing from God (Psalm 127:3). Though parents are responsible to rear and nurture their children, ultimately the children belong to God as His sons and daughters.

In the United States, during the 18th and 19th centuries, it was a common belief that life started when the baby could be felt moving around in the mother’s womb. Abortions before this time, called “quickening,” were accepted by some, even in religions that considered abortion a sin. The American Medical Association was instrumental in changing attitudes towards the unborn, and by the 1960s virtually all states had passed laws outlawing abortion.

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in the case of Roe v. Wade overrode all state laws. But the court avoided the critical issue by stating that it could not resolve the difficult problem of when an unborn child becomes a human person. Thus the court’s decision was to err on the side of taking life rather than to err on the side of saving life. When, then, does life begin? And when can it be considered human life?

James Drummeny in The New American urges us to consider this perspective. One of the key elements in the abortion debate is the true nature of the victim. If the unborn child is a human person, then it deserves the full protection of the law. Though it may still surprise some, there are few things more certain than that the unborn human child is a human being.

“It is a biological and scientific fact that human life begins at fertilization, when the sperm and egg meet. It is the moment a new individual begins to exist. The human baby is not a miniature adult but begins as an embryo only inches long, weighing only a few grams. The fertilization of a human egg, uniting the chromosomes that determine human traits, marks the beginning of a life. If it isn’t a human life, what is it?”

Some describe waking at night hearing a baby cry. They experience “Ironically, it is the babies themselves who are referred to as ‘donors,’ as the embryos and fetuses are referred to as ‘material.’ The accepted wisdom is that this is because the ‘fetus’ is a living thing, whereas the baby is not. It is taken that the baby is self-sacrificing, whereas the fetus is the one that ‘gives up.’ (Genesis 1:26)....”

Spinal column $150. Spinal cord $325. Limbs (at least two) $150. Eyes $75 ($50 if older than eight weeks). Brain $999 (if up to eight weeks old; 30 percent less if significantly fragmented).

This is hotly debated even among church denominations. For example, in the federal final authority is the Bible. Although God’s Word doesn’t specifically mention abortion, it does have much to say about the underlying principles and the value of human life.

Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that God made humanity in His image. This statement is profound in that it gives us insight into the purpose of human life. God reveals the potential of human beings when He declares, “I will be His God and He shall be My Son” (Revelation 21:7).

God created humanity because He wants children of His own! For by creating them, God chose the method for human reproduction. He told Adam and Eve: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth...” (Genesis 1:28).

The tenth-of-an-inch-long embryo is already forming eyes, a spinal cord and a digestive system. Forty days after fertilization brain waves can be recorded. Delicate, tiny toes and fingers are beginning to show by the eighth week. By the 16th week the fetus is moving, punching and kicking.

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The act of terminating the life of an unborn child doesn’t proceed out of a vacuum. Abortion is a symptom. Along with divorces, broken homes, mental anguish and the physical suffering of venerable diseases, abortion is one of many symptoms of a society that has a selfish, misguided and even perverted view of the sexual relationship. God Himself designed for human reproduction, which God meant for human beings to enjoy as an expression of love within the bounds of marriage.

Every effect has a cause. The cause of growing societal tragedies is our willful disregard of our Creator’s instructions, given for our good (to better understand their benefits, be sure to request your free copy of The Ten Commandments). The healing solution is to return to marriage as the only acceptable environment for a sexual relationship and conception of children.

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Some argue that human life begins with brain activity, while others claim that abortions should be legal during any stage of pregnancy. This last position has led to heated debate over the permissibility of abortion on emotional grounds. Some, for example, say that the human fetus should have the moral right to live; others argue that murder—the unlawful taking of a human life—is never justifiable.

The ultimate solution

God will send Jesus Christ back to earth to establish His Kingdom, to build a new world governed by a higher law. He will create an environment of peace and harmony, a world that is safe for children. It will be a world safe for the unborn. The prophet Zechariah was inspired to write of this time when the Messiah will reign: “Old men and old women shall sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets” (Zechariah 8:4-5).

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