

# BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR KEY SOCIAL ISSUES

## Lesson #7

### Abortion

---

There have been over 50 million legal abortions in the United States since the Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand in 1973 following the Wade vs. Roe court case. In 1973 the number of legal abortions was 744,600. Twenty years later, by 1993, the number of abortions increased 200 percent bringing the total of legal abortions in the United States to 1,500,000 annually. Around the world the number of abortions is staggering. In China, where it is illegal to have more than one child, single providences have recorded more than 800,000 abortions annually. Though it is impossible to calculate the number of abortions, both legal and illegal in all countries around the world, it is estimated that thirty to forty-five million babies are voluntarily aborted each year by their mothers. Surely this is one of the greatest social issues facing the world today. In this study we will examine abortion in light of the Scriptures and attempt to apply Biblical principles to the abortion holocaust.

#### I. ABORTION DEFINED

A. **Abortion** is the act of bringing forth young prematurely.<sup>1</sup>

B. **Young Are Brought Forth Prematurely in Two General Ways, Spontaneously and by Induction.** Spontaneous abortion happens by natural processes, where there are no outside forces causing the premature birth. We usually refer to spontaneous abortions as miscarriages. Miscarriages occur when the baby for some reason dies in the womb and is expelled or when a fertilized egg fails to adhere to the uterine wall. The second category, abortion by *induction*, is when a baby is purposefully expelled from its mother's womb by outside forces. Induced abortions are often organized into three separate categories discussed below.

1. *Therapeutic abortions* are performed to save the mother's life.<sup>2</sup>

a) Tubal pregnancies fall into this category where the baby attaches in the fallopian tube of the mother and begins to grow putting both the life of the mother and baby into peril.<sup>3</sup>

b) Another form of therapeutic abortions is when the mother has a form of heart disease that puts her at risk if she were to carry her baby to full term.

---

<sup>1</sup>J. Carl Laney, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 139, #556, Oct. 1982, page 344.

<sup>2</sup>**Note:** Therapeutic abortions account for an infinitesimal number of the abortions performed yearly.

<sup>3</sup>J. Carl Laney notes: Ectopic (from *εκ*, "out of" and *τοπος*, "place") pregnancy refers to the implantation of the fertilized ovum somewhere outside the uterus. Tubal pregnancy is the most frequent of all ectopic pregnancies. This condition is usually detected by hemorrhaging and requires immediate medical attention. Major abdominal surgery is mandatory to remove the embryo before it ruptures the Fallopian tube. Neglecting treatment will allow the tube to burst, resulting in uncontrollable hemorrhaging and usually the death of the mother. This surgery is not considered "abortion" for its purpose is to prevent the death of the mother, not prevent the birth of the child. Perhaps with medical advances, physicians will eventually be able to relocate and preserve the living embryo (cf. Brown, *Death before Life*, pp. 22-23).

- c) Therapeutic abortion might also be performed on a woman who has cancer, especially uterine cancer, where the delay of chemotherapy or radiation would seriously jeopardize the mother and following through on the treatment during pregnancy would seriously jeopardize the unborn baby.
2. *Eugenic abortions* are another kind of induced abortions. Eugenic abortions are performed when it is discovered that the baby may have some physical or mental handicap either by examining the fluid surrounding the baby, through a process called Amniocentesis, or by performing an ultrasound. Upon finding an abnormality or what appears to be one, the mother may choose to abort the baby prematurely so she will not have to be inconvenienced in carrying the baby full term or having to deal with the complications of a handicapped child. Eugenic abortions, though more common than therapeutic abortions, constitute a very small number of the total abortions performed each year.
3. *Elective abortions* are performed when the mother's life is not in danger and when the baby is perfectly healthy. The reason elective abortions are performed is selfishness or "personal convenience." The mother does not want to be inconvenienced by carrying the baby to full term and caring for the baby after birth so she seeks assistance from others who are willing to terminate the life of her child. Elective abortions constitute the bulk of abortions performed today.

## II. TECHNIQUES USED TO PERFORM ABORTIONS

Abortions have become so common today that people have become desensitized to the term "abortion." Our society likes to cover up acts of sin with nice sounding terms. Adultery is an "affair," fornication "love," homosexuality "a gay lifestyle." Abortion is no different. Abortion is now a "choice" or a woman's "right." Yet even the term abortion has lost its significance. Most have become numb to what abortion really is and what it means to have an abortion. The purpose of this section is not to sensationalize abortion but to put it into proper light so that we can think biblically about abortion when we hear the term. Listed below are the most common ways abortions are performed.

- A. **Prostaglandin** is a chemical procedure which causes the uterus to contract and expel a healthy baby prematurely. Often a salt solution is injected into the womb (see below) to first kill the baby before it is born in order to make it more pleasant for the patient and nurses.
- B. **Hysterotomy** is performed during the last three months of pregnancy in the third trimester. It is basically a Caesarean section except that in this case the baby is wrapped in a blanket, unattended, and allowed to die.

- C. **Saline Injection** or salt poisoning involves removing some of the amniotic fluid and replacing it with concentrated salt solution. The salt burns the skin off of the baby, is ingested, and the baby dies of dehydration and brain hemorrhaging. The mother then goes into labor about 24 hours later and delivers a dead or dying baby. If the baby is still alive, it is laid aside and allowed to die.
- D. **Dilation and Curettage** also known as a D &C is performed by dilating the cervix with instruments that allow a looped shaped knife (curet) to be inserted into the womb. The curet is used to scrape the baby off of the womb and cut it into pieces so that it can be drawn out through the cervix. The parts of the baby are all assembled to make sure that nothing was left in the womb that might cause infection.
- E. **Suction Aspiration** is the most commonly used abortion technique. The cervix is dilated and a hollow tube with a knife-like edge is inserted into the womb. A strong suction then tears the healthy baby to pieces and sucks the remains into a container.
- F. **Morning after Pill, abortion pill, or RU-486 pill** is a pill taken orally and blocks certain hormones that allow for the fertilized egg to develop normally in the womb. At first the pill was called the “morning after pill” but it was soon discovered that it did not work as intended the morning after intercourse and worked best four to seven weeks into pregnancy. The abortion pill is advertised as a simple, safe, painless way of aborting an unwanted baby. The makers of RU-486 (Danco Laboratories) hope that the abortion pill will replace all surgical abortions. Statistics, however, show quite the opposite as many negative side effects and dangers have developed since the release of the abortion pill.

### III. SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES RELATED TO ABORTION

#### A. People Have Value Because They Are Created in the Image of God

1. **Gen. 1:26-27** Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
2. **James 3:9** With it [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God.
3. What do the texts above teach us about the image all humans reflect? How does this relate to abortion?

**B. Human Life Has Value as Indicated by Those Texts Which Require Capital Punishment for Murder**

1. **Gen. 9:5-6** And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man."
2. **Ex. 21:12** "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death."
3. How do these texts and other texts like them relate to abortion?

**C. The Ability to Conceive and Have Offspring Is a Blessing from God**

1. **Gen. 1:28** And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
2. **Psa. 127:3-5** Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They shall not be ashamed, When they speak with their enemies in the gate.
3. How does conception, being a blessing from God, relate to the abortion issue?

**D. God Creates and Recognizes People from Conception**

The single greatest question that needs to be answered concerning abortion is "*When does human life begin for a baby?*" Some have argued that it starts at conception, some have argued that it happens after the fertilized egg and its chromosomes are formed into male or female pairs. Still others argue that although there is life in the womb it is not human life until it is born. Still others argue that human life does not begin until there is self determination a year or more after birth. The Scriptures below address this critical question.

1. **Psa. 51:5** Behold, I [King David] was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.
2. **Psa. 139:13-16** For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret,

And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

3. **Isa. 49:1** Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called Me from the womb [The Servant Redeemer Jesus Christ]; From the body of My mother He named Me.
4. **Jer. 1:5** “Before I formed you [Jeremiah] in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”
5. **Lk. 1:15** “For he [John the Baptist] will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother’s womb.”
6. **Gal. 1:15** But when God set me [Apostle Paul] apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through his grace.
7. What do the above Scripture texts tell us about when we become a human being, a person that God knows?

#### E. **Exodus 21:22-25 Is a Special Text to Consider**

This text is a pivotal text in the abortion debate. It has two primary interpretations. The text is cited below, then the two views are stated and pro’s and con’s are listed.

22 “If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman’s husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide.  
23 But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life,  
24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”

1. *Miscarriage interpretation* says that Exodus 21:22-25 allows for abortion. Some see this passage as teaching that an unborn baby is only potentially a human. The text is interpreted to mean that if a woman is struck in a conflict between two men and she has a miscarriage and the baby dies, though the woman is uninjured, the man who struck the woman shall pay a fine as the judges decide. But, if the woman is injured the law of *lex talionis* i.e., eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, life for a life will be enforced. It is argued that since the penalty for ending the life of a fetus is less than ending the life of a mother, the fetus must not be human. Therefore, abortion does not constitute the termination of a human life and is permissible.

- a) The problems with this interpretation are many. The usual term for miscarriage is not used in this text but the normal term for live child birth.
  - b) The text makes no distinction between the harm done either to the mother or the child it merely addresses cases of injury or no injury with no subject stated. If only the mother was in view, the Hebrew would use the feminine pronouns “she” or “her.”
  - c) Even if one assumes the above interpretation is true, the text does not condone abortion.
  - d) The text cannot apply to abortion because the law is applied to an *accidental* injury, abortion is not accidental but purposeful.
  - e) Even if you agree with the above interpretation, you would still have to conclude that the death of the infant was evil as a penalty is still required if in fact it is talking about miscarriage.
  - f) If the above interpretation were correct it is in keeping with the law of Moses which normally does not require the death penalty for accidental death (**Ex. 21:13-14, 20-21; Numb. 35:10-34; Deut. 19:1-13**).
  - g) The text cannot argue that a fetus is less human or not a person because there is a lesser penalty for ending its life. For instance, in the preceding context a master who accidentally kills his slave escapes without penalty (**Ex. 21:20-21**) but this does not mean that the slave is any less human or not a person.
  - h) **Conclusion:** Though the above interpretation of **Ex. 21:22-25** is the weaker of the two, even if granted, it still does not hold up under scrutiny and hence must be rejected as a text that permits abortion.
2. The *Premature life child birth* view of **Exodus 21:22-25** does not allow for abortion but defines abortion as murder punishable by death. The text is interpreted to mean, if a woman is accidentally struck when two men are fighting and she gives birth prematurely but no injury is sustained by either her or her baby, then the courts shall fine the man who injured the woman and payment shall be made to the husband. But if either the woman or the baby is injured or killed, the law of eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life will be enforced. This view is the best view for reasons listed below.

- a) The normal Hebrew word for miscarriage is not used in this text but the normal word for live child birth (see **Gen. 25:26; 38:28-30**).
- b) Moses knew the normal word for miscarriage for he used it both before and after this text, but he did not use it here which tells us he did not have a miscarriage in mind, but premature live birth (see **Gen. 31:38; Ex. 23:26; Job 2:10**).
- c) The word “injury” in **vss. 22-23** is indefinite in that it does not designate either the mother or the child. Because the term is ambiguous we know that it is talking about both the mother and the child.
- d) The fact that this is the only place in all of the Bible where the death penalty is required for accidental death is significant. It shows us the value God places on both mothers and their unborn children. The death of either the child or mother and child by accident would bring with it the death penalty!

#### IV. **APPLYING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO ABORTION SITUATIONS**

- A. **A woman is raped and as a result gets pregnant.** Should she have an abortion?<sup>4</sup>
- B. **A young woman approaches you and tells you that she is pregnant because of incest and asks you if you think she should have an abortion.** What do you tell her?
- C. **A woman has cancer and needs treatment immediately which will most certainly kill the baby.** If the treatment is delayed there is a good chance that both the mother and possibly the child will die. What should the woman do?<sup>5</sup>
- D. **Tests concluded that a child has physical and/or emotional defects while yet in its mother’s womb.** The doctors feel the child may die young or not even live to full term. If by chance the baby makes it to full term and lives, it will be severely mentally or physically handicapped. Should the mother get an abortion?

---

<sup>4</sup> Laney points to a study done in Minnesota where it was discovered that in 3,500 cases of rape there were no pregnancies. While pregnancy has occurred from rape, it is the rare exception.

<sup>5</sup>C. Everett Koop, Surgeon General of the United States from 1981 to 1989, a leading pediatric surgeon, has stated, “In my thirty-six years in pediatric surgery I have never known of one instance where the child had to be aborted to save the mother’s life.” C. Everett Koop, “Deception-on-Demand,” *Moody Monthly*, May 1980, p. 24.

E. **A classic argument used by pro-abortionists** to defend a woman's right to do what she wants with her body is found in Judith Jarvis Thomson's "A Defense of Abortion." She asks the reader to imagine awakening to find that he or she is in bed with a famous violinist who is unconscious. The violinist has a fatal kidney ailment, and only you have the right blood type to help. Therefore, while you slept, his blood was passed through your system to cleanse it. To unplug him would kill him. You express your displeasure with the set-up, but are advised that it will only take nine months to complete your task. Thus, the question you are faced with is simple. Since all persons have a right to life, are you morally obligated to spend the next nine months of your life keeping this world-famous violinist alive? Thomson's answer is no. [Thomson's reasoning is as follows,] She claims that even if the fetus has a right to life, the mother's right to control her own body outweighs the right of the child. The mother and child are not seeking control of a body that has unfortunately been rented to both of them. Rather, the mother owns the house. The child is the intruder.<sup>6</sup> Judith Thomson has tried to use this argument to support a woman's right to do what she wants with her own body. Problems with her argument and reasoning are listed below.

1. The violinist is a stranger, but an unborn child is not, they are blood relatives of the mother.
2. The woman is bed ridden for nine months which is not the case in a typical pregnancy.
3. The woman and the violinist are linked together deceptively without consent of the woman while a pregnancy is the natural outcome of wilful intercourse. Feinberg has written, "whenever a woman consents to sexual intercourse, she must understand that she is consenting, explicitly or implicitly, to becoming pregnant if that should eventuate. Adult privileges and pleasures include adult responsibilities!"<sup>7</sup>
4. The violinist's need for the woman's body is not something the woman is responsible for, but the woman is responsible for the life of her own child.
5. In Thomson's example the woman can wilfully unhook herself, but an abortion requires the assistance of others.
6. Thomson's illustration would be more analogous if: 1) The violinist was the woman's son or daughter. 2) If the woman only had to be hooked up to them at night, not twenty-four hours a day. 3) If the woman volunteered for the procedure. Without these alterations Thomson's example most closely resembles pregnancy caused from rape.

---

<sup>6</sup>The story and the arguments which follow come from Judith Jarvis Thompson's, "A Defense of Abortion," *Phil Pub Affairs* 1 (1971): 47– 66, as quoted by John Feinberg in, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, page. 66-68. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1996, c1993.

<sup>7</sup>Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, pg. 68.

7. Thomson argues that a woman's "ownership" of her body gives her the right to kill her baby. We have a right to own property in our country, but we do not have a right to kill trespassers or guests whom we have invited to come onto our property. Ownership does not give us the right to kill others, on the contrary, if someone gets hurt on our property we are held liable.
8. Finally, Thomson's illustration fails to address a person's moral duty. The sixth commandment "you shall not murder" requires two moral responsibilities. First, the responsibility not to terminate life. Secondly, the responsibility to preserve life. Abortion is the wilful act of ending the life of another.
9. **Conclusion:** The illustration by Thomson is but one of many that might be examined. Though popular, and often referred to as a classic argument, it fails to hold up under close examination.

F. **Pro-abortionists argue that it is morally wrong to bring any child into the world who is unwanted or unloved.** Unwanted pregnancies lead to unwanted children, and unwanted children result in abused children. Therefore, they argue, if a woman does not want a child, she should be free to abort it.<sup>8</sup> The fact is, there are couples waiting in line to adopt children. If the natural mother of a child does not want it, other qualified parents are waiting. Yet even if the child had to grow up in an orphanage, this would be better than execution in the womb.

## V. HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WHO HAS HAD AN ABORTION

As a believer you may encounter someone who has had one or more abortions. In fact, if you are a woman, chances are ever increasing that you have had an abortion. Many women who have had abortions are haunted by their sins and suffer terrible guilt, pain, and regret once they realize they have killed their own child. Regardless of the woman, her situation, and the amount of knowledge she had when she chose to get an abortion, what can believers do to offer hope to those who have had abortions?

### A. The Bible Says All Men Are Murderers

1. **Mt. 5:21-22** "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' 22" "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

---

<sup>8</sup>Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, Page 69.

2. **James 2:9-11** But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. 11For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not commit murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

**B. All Men Deserve to Suffer the Wrath of God Because of Their Sin**

1. **Jn. 3:36** “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”
2. **Eph. 2:1-3** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

**C. Christ Died to Save Sinners**

1. **Isa. 53:6** All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.
2. **Rom. 5:8-10** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

**D. There Is Total Forgiveness for Those Who Know Jesus Christ**

1. **Eph. 1:7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.
2. **I Jn. 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

## E. **God Is In the Business of Changing Lives**

1. **I Cor. 6:9-10** Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.
  
2. **Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

We must remind those who are hurting from having an abortion that they cannot change the past, but they can be forgiven for sins they have committed in the past by placing their faith in Jesus Christ. They don't need to torture themselves on the rack of their own griefs because through faith in Jesus Christ they can receive forgiveness and have their sins washed away.

## VI. **WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT THE ABORTION EPIDEMIC?**

Christians need to take action against abortion. Discuss which methods of dealing with abortion below are biblical and which are not.

- A. Bombing abortion clinics
- B. Praying
- C. Social activism, politics, lobbying
- D. Angry hysteria, yelling, screaming, name calling
- E. Study the Scriptures so you can give wise counsel.
- F. Picket abortion clinics with graphic signs and condemning slogans.
- G. Learn how to share the gospel effectively.
- H. Support pregnancy clinics which educate people, give biblical advice, share the gospel, and inform people not to get abortions.
- I. Go around condemning those who have had abortions or are in favor of abortion as murderers who are on their way to hell.
- J. Speak the truth about abortion in the fruit of the Spirit when you have the opportunity.
- K. Educate your family, children, friends, and church.