

Is an Embryo a Person?
Page 6

Does Abortion Save Women's Lives?
Page 8

Is Abortion Healthcare?
Page 10

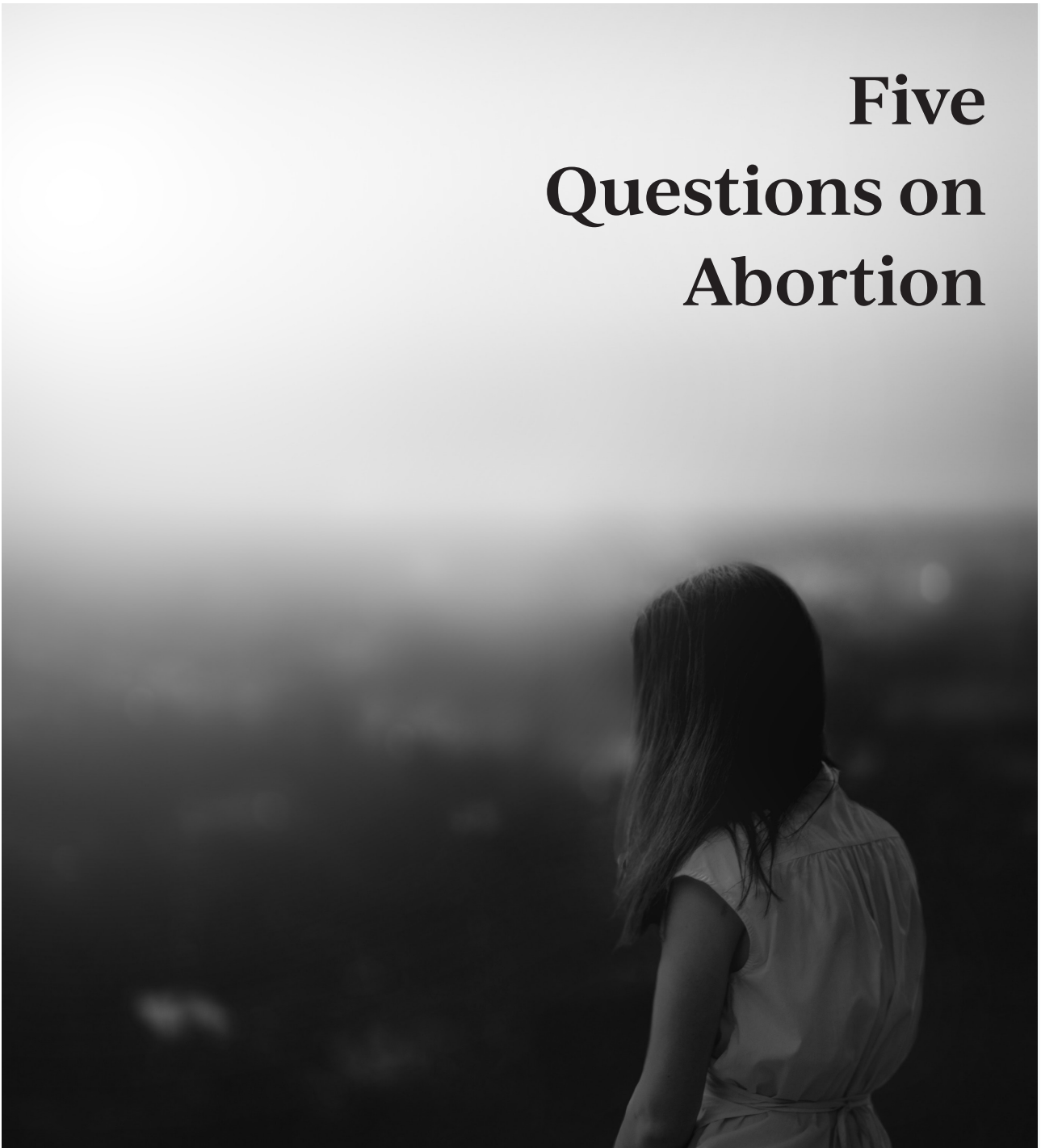
Colson Center

Abortion

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Five Questions on Abortion

CLARITY. CONFIDENCE. COURAGE.





CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

04

Abortion



Five Questions on Abortion

NO. 1	06	Is an Embryo a Person?
NO. 2	08	Does Abortion Save Women's Lives?
NO. 3	10	Is Abortion Healthcare?
NO. 4	12	What Kind of Society Is Safe for Unborn Children?
NO. 5	14	Will Abortion Ever Be Unthinkable (Like Slavery)?
	15	Recommended Resources



Abortion

The 2022 *Dobbs* decision, overthrowing the 50-year reign of *Roe v. Wade* and paving the way for states to decide the legality of abortion, is a colossal victory for the pro-life movement. But with this victory comes a critical question for pro-lifers: Now what? In the next phase of the fight for life, the Church's response must include:

- Practical help for women and communities facing unplanned pregnancies
- The continued work of apologists to answer common objections and engage the hearts and minds of those still unconvinced of the personhood of preborn babies
- An assessment of our society's moral foundations

To protect the lives of women and the preborn, evaluating society's moral foundations is vital, because public policies are only as good as the underlying principles they are built on. As we've witnessed over the last 50 years, a system built on anything less than unshakeable truth—as defined by God—results in the denial of human dignity for the most vulnerable among us.

This resource includes five articles addressing questions about abortion and being pro-life in a post-*Roe* era, including:

1. *Is an Embryo a Person?*
2. *Does Abortion Save Women's Lives?*
3. *Is Abortion Healthcare?*
4. *What Kind of Society Is Safe for Unborn Children?*
5. *Will Abortion Ever Be Unthinkable (Like Slavery)?*



We pray these articles give you a vision of the work God has called us to in this time and place: to push against the death and destruction brought about by sin, and to cultivate what is good, true, and beautiful—for the glory of God and the flourishing of society.

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Is an Embryo a Person?



Human rights are grounded in being a member of the human family, not how we currently function, how developed we are, or how old we are.

Stephanie Gray Connors

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We held a public event on the evening before one of our annual Wilberforce Weekends to talk about how we can prepare to live in a post-Roe world. An important aspect of that event was learning how we can respond to the common slogans and lines that people often throw around in support of abortion. We asked Stephanie Gray Connors, one of our annual Wilberforce Weekends' speakers, and one of the great apologists for the sanctity of life in our present moment, to talk about how we can prepare to live in a post-Roe world. An important aspect of that event was learning how we can respond to the common slogans and lines that people often throw around in support of abortion.

Here is Stephanie responding to the claim that "embryos aren't really people":

Embryos aren't people. And when we want to respond to that, the first thing we want to do is ask the question, "What are embryos? And what are people?" Let's seek definitions of those two terms.

If you look at the word embryo—you actually look it up in the dictionary—it says an animal in the early stages of growth. And I would like to point out as a pro-lifer, I do not believe in protecting all embryos. Dogs have embryos. Cats have embryos. Other species have embryos because the embryo is the animal in the early stage of development. The embryos that I'm interested in protecting are the human embryos that happened to be at the earliest stage of their development. The question is, "Are preborn children human embryos at the very beginning of pregnancy?" And to answer that we have to ask, "Is the pregnant woman human?" Yes. "Is her partner human?" Yes. Then, that means the embryo in the pregnant woman's body must be of the same species.

The next question we want to put forward in such a conversation is, "Is that embryo that we know is human because the parents are human—is the embryo alive?" And to answer that we ask ourselves, "Is the embryo growing?" And scientifically we know that one cell grows into two, four, eight, doubling every time. And so, by virtue of the embryo's growth, the embryo must be alive. By virtue of having human parents, the embryo must be human.

"What are people?" Well, if you ask an abortion



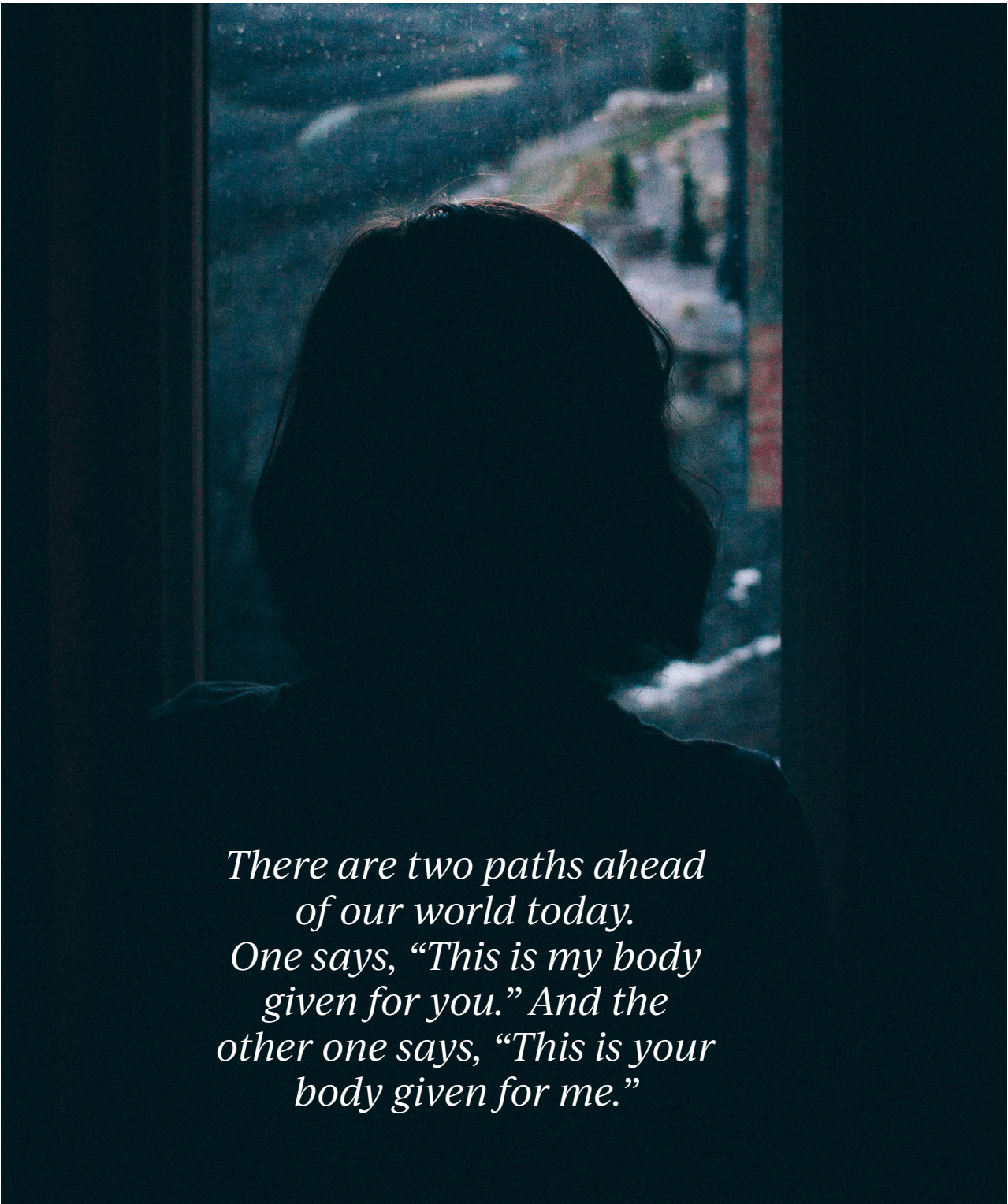
supporter that, they'll say a person is someone who's rational, conscious, and self-aware, and an embryo at the beginning of pregnancy might be human but isn't those things. I have a nine-month-old baby. Yes, she interacts with me to a degree, but let me tell you she does not act rational, conscious, or self-aware very often. I even have to get boogers out of her nose for her. She is entirely incapable of doing many things. "Is she a person?" Yes, because she's human, because she's a member of the human family, and she has the inherent capacity to be rational, conscious, and self-aware like all of us. But due to her age, she can't yet act on that capacity.

In the same way, if someone is having surgery under anesthetic, in that moment they're not rational, conscious, and self-aware. If you have a conversation, or try to, with someone under anesthetic, they will not respond back. If you say, "May I kill you?" They will not object. It doesn't mean it's okay to kill them because they have the inherent capacity to be rational, conscious, and self-aware. But due to the circumstances of surgery, they can't act on it. In the same way with a born baby, like a nine-month-old, they have the inherent capacity for this higher brain function. But due to their age, they can't act on it. And the same is true for human embryos. They have the inherent capacities as all of us have. But due to their age, they can't yet act on those capacities.

The question then is this: "Are human rights grounded in how old we are, how developed we are, or who we are as members of the human family?"

Throughout history, humans have been denied personhood status based on features that don't matter. Women were denied personhood status at one point because of sex, blacks because of skin color, Jews because of ethnicity. And we reject the denial of personhood status of those humans. We reject the denial of personhood status when it comes to preborn humans because the only difference between them and you and me is their age. And human rights are grounded in being a member of the human family, not how we currently function, how developed we are, or how old we are.

Does Abortion Save Women's Lives?

A person with dark hair is seen from behind, looking out a window. The view outside is a snowy, hilly landscape with some buildings and trees. The scene is dimly lit, with the light coming from the window.

*There are two paths ahead
of our world today.
One says, "This is my body
given for you." And the
other one says, "This is your
body given for me."*

At our annual Wilberforce Weekend conference in 2022, we held a pre-event to discuss what it means to prepare for a post-Roe future. The presentations were exceptional across the board. Throughout the evening, Stephanie Gray Connors responded to various slogans used in our culture to promote abortion. Here is one of the short talks she gave in response to the slogan, "legal abortion saves women's lives":

"Legal abortion saves women's lives." Why is that claim made? It's made to imply that if abortion becomes illegal, it will be unsafe. And the question we want to ask is this, "For who? Abortion will be unsafe for who?" Because abortion is always unsafe, whether legal or illegal, for the preborn child.

Another point we want to make is to ask this question: "Even if abortion, when legal, is safer for women than illegal—even if we were to concede that—is it ethical to legalize homicide just to make it safer for those who participate in it?"

We could come up with a little parable, and say, imagine you're a nurse in an emergency room and a man comes in with broken, bruised, swollen, bloodied knuckles. And so, you begin bandaging his wounds, and you say, "Sir, what happened that caused this to you?" And he replies, "I was beating my wife tonight, and this resulted." Would it make sense for the nurse to say, "You know, we really need to legalize spousal abuse and give men boxing gloves so that when they beat their wives, they don't hurt themselves"? Now, we would never say that. Why? Because we recognize what brought on the infliction of harm to the man was infliction of harm to another.

And so, the question is, "When an abortion occurs, does that abortion inflict harm on the most vulnerable of the human child or human beings—that of the preborn child?" And if the answer is yes, then we may not legalize it.

But when I hear that false claim from abortion supporters—legal abortion saves women's lives—what I'm hearing is a concern for women's lives, and on that I can agree. As a woman, most particularly, I too am concerned about my life and the lives of other women. But my concern is not just that women survive. I want women to thrive.

So, we have to ask the question, "What makes a woman thrive?" And I would suggest the answer is what makes a woman or anyone thrive is they live to the fullness of who they were created to be. And the ultimate fulfillment biologically, the greatest level of maturity for a woman, is maternity, is having offspring. A woman is called to motherhood, whether that is lived out through the physical reality of biological mother or the spiritual reality of spiritual motherhood. But the point is all women at the heights of their maturity are called to motherhood.

What is abortion? It is a rejection of that. I have worked full time in the pro-life movement for 20 years. I have seen a lot of people on both sides of the debate, and I can tell you the most bitter people I have met over the last two decades are people who have rejected their maternity, and the happiest, most thriving women I have met are those who have embraced their femininity in the form of maternity, whether that is biological mothers or spiritual mothers in the form of nuns I've met who are happier than most people I know.

There are two paths ahead of our world today. One says, "This is my body given for you." And the other one says, "This is your body given for me." As we reflect on those two choices, I would suggest the great tragedy of abortion [is this]: It's not just that it destroys the body of a baby, but that it destroys the very nature of a woman.

Stephanie Gray Connors

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Is Abortion Healthcare?



Healthcare is about maintaining health and restoring a sick body to a healthy state, and abortion does the opposite of that.

Stephanie Gary Connors

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During the “Preparing for a Post-Roe World” event at the annual Wilberforce Weekend conference, pro-life speaker, author, and apologist Stephanie Gray Connors responded to various slogans commonly used today to promote abortion. Here’s her response to the statement, “Abortion is healthcare”:

“Abortion is healthcare.” Instead of using five minutes to reply, it’s really tempting to just use five words. “What? That is ridiculous.” To respond to that, what we want to do is ask a question, two in particular. We want to ask, “What is abortion, and what is healthcare?”

In terms of answering the question, “What is abortion?” I’m reminded of something my dad would tell me growing up. My dad is originally from Scotland. He didn’t immigrate to Canada, where I’m originally from, until he was in his thirties, which means my dad’s got a fantastic Scottish accent, right? He’s right from Glasgow, Barrhead.

Anyway, so my dad would always say to me growing up, “Right, Stephanie, your old Scottish

grandfather used to say, 'use their own words against them.'" So, when it comes to answering the question, "What is abortion?", don't quote a pro-lifer. Use the abortion supporter's words against them. Go to their textbooks. What do they say?

And so, I went to the National Abortion Federation's textbook on abortion. It's called the Clinician's Guide to Medical and Surgical Abortion. And in chapter 10, they specifically refer to feticidal techniques. ... So, the question we want to ask is this: "What is the meaning of the root word *cide*?"

Feticidal, *cide*. That means to kill. So, there's an admission there by using the term feticidal, that it's a technique that involves killing. Or take one of their chapters on D&E abortions after 12 weeks. That chapter in this textbook refers to the pregnancy elements by calling them "spinal cord" and "calvarium." Well, we want to ask, "The spinal cord and calvarium of who?"

That textbook is not referring to the spinal cord of the pregnant woman, but rather of the preborn child. So, there's this admission that it's killing and that it involves parts not of the woman but of the baby and dismembering those particular parts. Then, there's Planned Parenthood itself. We just heard the reference to Margaret Sanger, their founder. And yet, would you know that back in 1952, long before *Roe v. Wade*, they had a brochure not on abortion but on birth control. And in answering questions about birth control, they answered the question, "Is birth control abortion?" And they said ... "Definitely not. An abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun." ... Planned Parenthood, 1952.

So, if we're asking the question, "What is abortion?" we get the answer from abortion supporters that abortion is killing. So, then we have to ask ourselves if we're trying to figure out whether killing is healthcare, "What is healthcare?" And we know healthcare involves the treatment and prevention of disease or maintaining and restoring health. So, the question is "What disease are we responding to when someone's pregnant?"

And the answer is pregnancy isn't a disease. It's a sign the body is working right. If you have cancer of the eye, you might have to remove the eye. It could cause you to be blind, but you never take a healthy eye and maim it. So, with abortion, we actually have a healthy body, a healthy state—a pregnancy—which should occur because the body is fertile at that time, and then abortion is maiming that. It's like destroying an eye that's functioning well. It doesn't make sense. And it's certainly not healthcare.

You know, some abortion supporters might say, "Well, abortion is healthcare because physicians do it." So, we want to ask a question: "Just because the doctor does something, does his action suddenly become morally acceptable by his involvement?"

And then to answer that, we can use a little parable. Imagine you have someone working in the black-market underground organ-harvesting industry where they kidnap people or take political prisoners and have their organs removed—maybe their kidneys, maybe their liver, maybe their heart—and transplant them into someone who's paid good money to get access to those organs. We all agree that's unethical.

But in order to remove the organs from one person and successfully implant them in another, you can't have just a random person on the street doing that, right? You need a physician to do it. Would we ever say because it's a surgeon working in the black underground human organ trafficking market—would we ever say that that type of organ harvesting is ethical and healthcare because a doctor does it? And obviously, we would say it is not ethical, and it's not healthcare, because what a physician is doing in that case is destructive to a human person.

And, so, since we know the preborn child is a human person, albeit younger, and because we know abortion kills that human person, and because we know healthcare is about maintaining health and restoring a sick body to a healthy state, and abortion does the opposite of that, an abortion is not healthcare.

QUESTION NO. 4

What Kind of Society Is *Safe* for Unborn Children?



On January 22, 1973, the United States Supreme Court fabricated a so-called “right to abortion” out of thin air. This travesty of justice, which enabled the deaths of tens of millions of innocent little souls, deserves a place among the absolute worst legal decisions in American history.¹ In fact, additional flawed moral and legal reasoning soon followed in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* and *Doe v. Bolton*. Both built on *Roe v. Wade*’s flawed moral and legal reasoning, rendering almost all restrictions on abortion, however mild, “unconstitutional.”

Today, thanks to the goodness of God, the long labors of pro-lifers over the years, and the keen legal efforts of the present Supreme Court, *Roe* is no more. That’s reason to celebrate. However, in the months since the *Dobbs* decision, it has become painfully clear how much work remains for those committed to the end of abortion. Specifically, *Dobbs* returned the legal decision-making about abortion to the states. The legal decision-making that has happened, at least so far, is not encouraging.

In Kansas, a state-wide pro-life ballot initiative went down in flames. A few months later, Michigan passed the most radical pro-

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abortion law that America has seen. This was unexpected by a majority of pro-life pundits. In Montana, of all places, a bill that would have merely required helping babies born alive after a botched abortion procedure failed.

When even a conservative state can't be bothered to restrict personal freedom to preserve the life of a baby outside of the womb, why would we expect pro-life success anywhere else?

In Psalm 11:3, David famously asks, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Recently, I was surprised to learn that there is some scholarly debate as to whether this was stated in a present tense, such as "Now that the foundations are gone, what can the righteous do?" or in a past tense, "If the foundations are destroyed, what have the righteous done?" The first interpretation is an observation that things cannot stand without a solid foundation. The second is more of an appeal that if our work ignores the building of proper foundations, we are wasting our time.

Either way, the connection between preserving foundations and the work of the Church in any cultural setting is plain. In our case, living in the midst of the cultural evil of abortion, three foundations have been lost and demand our attention.

The first necessary foundation is the idea of the image of God as the only basis of human dignity and value. The loss of our understanding of who we are as human beings leaves only some vague notion of autonomy and self-expression as that which grounds our existence. Certain members of our community, those who stand in the way of our autonomy and self-expression, must be sacrificed to ensure this flimsy notion of self.

The story of abortion in America reveals how many victims there are of this bad idea, as described last year by Ryan T. Anderson and Alexandra DeSanctis in their book *Tearing Us Apart: How Abortion Harms Everything and Solves Nothing*. And now a new book, co-authored by Marvin Olasky and Leah Savas, offers the historical timeline of abortion. *The Story of Abortion in America: A Street-Level History, 1652-2022* is a thoroughgoing study of the vile role played by abortion across the whole of American history.

The second foundation that requires our attention is the defense of truth as essential to understanding reality. In a culture captivated by relativism, as ours is, there are a million and one claims of being "personally pro-life" that lead to a million and two rationalizations of taking preborn lives. Unless people have a clear sense that some things, like abortion, are just wrong, long-term moral progress on the issue will be nearly impossible.

A final foundation that must be re-built is married

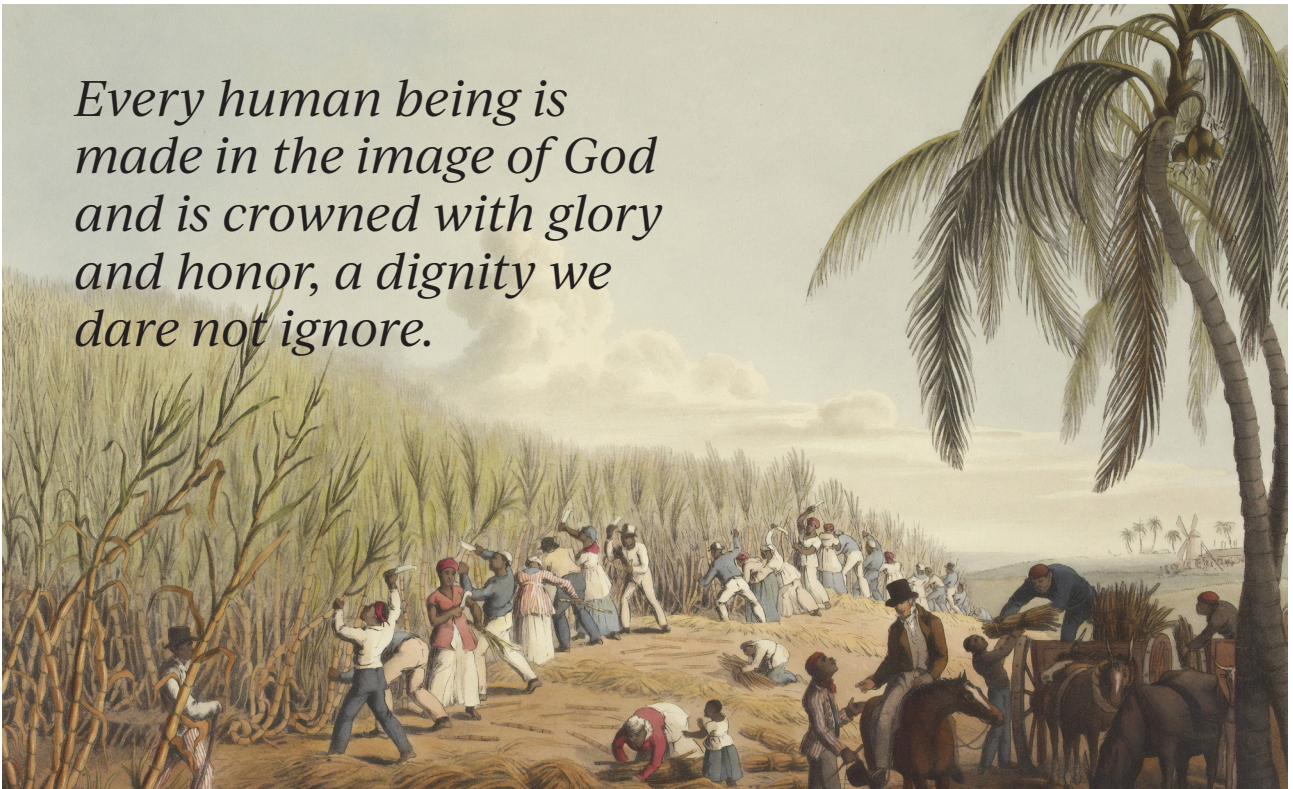
The loss of our understanding of who we are as human beings leaves only some vague notion of autonomy and self-expression as that which grounds our existence. Certain members of our community, those who stand in the way of our autonomy and self-expression, must be sacrificed to ensure this flimsy notion of self.

moms and dads as the best situation for the care and protection of children. Simply put, the more that fatherless and husbandless homes become the norm, both increasing in number and decreasing in scrutiny, the more preborn children will be at risk and their deaths accepted as convenient.

Every January, many pro-lifers take part in the March for Life in Washington, D.C., again committing to the great moral cause of our day. Because the Supreme Court no more settled the issue in *Dobbs* than it did in *Roe*, the work continues.

1 David G. Savage, "Where Roe went wrong: A sweeping new abortion right built on a shaky legal foundation," *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2022-05-03/how-roe-vs-wade-went-wrong-broad-new-right-to-abortion-rested-on-a-shaky-legal-foundation>

Every human being is made in the image of God and is crowned with glory and honor, a dignity we dare not ignore.



QUESTION NO.5

Will Abortion Ever Be Unthinkable (Like Slavery)?

In most of the world today, slavery is unthinkable. Is it possible that we could ever reach that same place with abortion in America?

Just as there were once states where it was legal to own slaves and other states where it wasn't, we are now a nation deeply divided on the issue of abortion on a state-by-state level. In certain states, abortion is allowed, encouraged, and even subsidized. In others, abortion is all but illegal. The history of the Church's stance on both issues, abolition and abortion, is instructive as we seek to obey Christ in a post-Roe world.

Clearly, the early Church did not like slavery. The New Testament condemns behaviors that were endemic to the slave trade. In his letter to Philemon, Paul gave broad hints that masters should free their Christian slaves. Early Christians often purchased slaves specifically to set them free.

Even so, neither the New Testament nor the early Church pushed for full abolition of slavery, for at least two reasons. First, taking a public stand would have

brought even more unwanted attention to an already targeted group. Second, the ancient world offered no model to Christians for a society without slaves, so few could envision what that would look like. Though Christians saw slavery as a curse, they could not conceive of being rid of it entirely (any more than they could imagine a world rid of disease or poverty). This failure of moral imagination meant that it would be centuries before the implications of the Gospel would lead Christian rulers to take definitive steps toward abolishing slavery.

By the Middle Ages, overt slavery was rare in Europe, and Church leaders spoke out against it. Thomas Aquinas claimed that slavery might be part of the "right of nations" but was against the law of nature and therefore a sin.¹ When, centuries later, the infamous Atlantic slave trade began, Portugal and Spain defied the decrees of four different popes to spread it in their colonies. In the English-speaking world, the rampant practice of slavery found opposition among Quakers

and a rising evangelicalism that eventually ended first the slave trade, then slavery altogether.

All this means that the American theologians who defended slavery were following the culture's lead, not Church teaching. Though it took far too long for the implications of the Gospel to become clear, the teaching of both Jesus and Paul of the spiritual and moral equality of all persons meant that slavery was incompatible with Christianity, and its abolition in Christian states was only a matter of time. Eventually, because of the commitment to the worth and dignity of every human being as created in the image of God, Christians fought to end the abuse of slavery.

In contrast, the Christian position on abortion has been clear from day one. In the *Didache*, the earliest non-New Testament Christian work to survive, Christians are instructed, "You shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born."² Similarly, the late first- or early second-century *Epistle of Barnabas*, a manual of ethics in this early period, says, "Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion, nor again shalt thou kill it when it is born."³ In "A Plea for the Christians," written in 177, Athenagoras of Athens wrote, "We say that those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder."⁴

Similar teaching can be found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, the pseudonymous *Apocalypse of Peter*, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian, and Lactantius, which takes us up to the decriminalization of Christianity by Constantine. The teaching of the Church on abortion has been clear from the start and continued to be clear well into the 20th century.

Only recently have some claiming the name of Christ accepted abortion as morally licit,⁵ or worse, have celebrated it.⁶ Christian opposition to abortion is based on precisely the same reasoning as Christian opposition to slavery. Every human being is made in the image of God and is crowned with glory and honor, a dignity we dare not ignore. The same dehumanizing and depersonalizing claim that undergirded the idea that slaves were less worthy as human beings, and further undergirded the horrific treatment of African Americans in the Jim Crow South, is also at work in pro-abortion thinking. And yet, the same liberating power of the *imago dei* that broke the chains of slavery demands

that we see the dignity of preborn children and work to protect them.

Slavery and the subsequent dehumanizing treatment of African Americans was evil, and the crusade to end both was (and is) God's work. May we also recognize that dehumanizing and killing the unborn is at least as evil, and rightly abhorred.

1 "Summa Theologiae: Right (Secunda Secundae Partis, Q. 57)," *New Advent*, accessed March 21, 2023, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3057.htm>.

2 "Didache," *Early Christian Writings*, accessed March 21, 2023, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>.

3 "The Epistle of Barnabas," *Early Christian Writings*, accessed March 21, 2023, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/barnabas-lightfoot.html>.

4 "Church Fathers: A Plea for the Christians (Athenagoras)," *New Advent*, accessed March 21, 2023, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0205.htm>.

5 ERLC Staff, "Facts about the history of the SBC and the pro-life cause," *The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*, January 17, 2020, <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/5-facts-about-the-history-of-the-sbc-and-the-pro-life-cause/>.

6 Office of Government Relations, "Episcopal Church statement on reports concerning Supreme Court case pertaining to abortion," *The Episcopal Church*, May 3, 2022, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ogr/episcopal-church-statement-on-reports-concerning-supreme-court-case-pertaining-to-abortion/>.

Recommended Resources

For those walking through unexpected or crisis pregnancy:

- **Continuum of Care** - Practical resources and holistic support for moms and families, including healthcare, housing, and job assistance
- **National Pathways to Life** - A guide to help churches support moms and babies in need
- **Abortion Pill Reversal** - A network that helps pregnant women reverse the effects of the first half of the chemical abortion process
- **Support After Abortion** - Support groups for those experiencing the grief of abortion or pregnancy loss

Pro-life organizations and advocates:

- **Live Action**
- **Students for Life**
- **Love Unleashes Life**

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