



### **Session Three: MY BODY, MY CHOICE:**

#### **Let's Talk Reproductive Health...**

According to a *Time* magazine article, [How Gen Z Held Off the Red Wave](#), U.S. voters under the age of 29 came out in record numbers in the recent



midterms to vote for “reproductive rights.” Other than climate change, there was no bigger issue. They supported John Fetterman of Pennsylvania by a 46-point margin. 86% of Gen Z voters in battleground states identified as pro-choice.

If you want to have faith dialogues with Millennials and Gen Zs, you will have to deal with one of their most sacred credos: “My body, my choice.” And yet, there is no belief

that cuts more at the heart of the gospel than “My body, my choice.”

#### **Some Issues are too Monstrous to Ignore**

I recently watched a chilling *Netflix* documentary: *Final Account*. It stitched together never-before-seen interviews with 300 of the last living generation who participated in Hitler’s Third Reich. Among them were former SS officers, Hitler Youth, concentration camp guards, and those who remained silent after smelling burning flesh from nearby crematoriums. Some were still proud Nazis, others excused their deeds, expressed guilt for their actions, or remorse for doing nothing. Afterward, I jotted down my first reactions in a couple of lines:

We focus on the monsters, but they are too few to cause danger. Rather, it is we who remain silent in their presence who perpetrate the greatest evils in this world.

Edmund Burke famously said, "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." In 2022, more than a million abortions were reported in the U.S. In New York City last year, more African American babies were aborted than were born. There have been 65 million U.S. abortions reported since Roe v Wade in 1973. Yet, far too many Christians have remained silent during this baby holocaust.

Proverbs 31:8 says, "*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves...*" Surely, the unborn cannot speak for themselves. So we must speak for them. But, we must recognize these key facts:

**1. There is a softening toward abortion in churches.** According to the Guttmacher Institute, 54% of those using the services of Planned Parenthood self-identify as practicing Christians. Barna Research data says that while older Christians are more opposed to abortion than ever, between 2016-2020 there was a seismic shift among Evangelicals under 29 years of age. 40% now identify as pro-choice.

Why this shift? A recent headline in a Pew Research blog begins with these words: [Few U.S. sermons mention abortion...](#) Pew's research shows that evangelical pastors are talking less and less about abortion from the pulpit. Perhaps this is one reason their parishioners are less passionate about this monstrous evil.

**2. The pro-choice movement is winning the PR battle.** Satan is the master of deception and seduction. We shouldn't be surprised if those who do his work are also masters of deception, especially in their effective use of language: *pro-abortion* has morphed to *pro-choice* to "*My body, my choice*" to *reproductive health* to "*protecting reproductive health rights*." You have to give them credit. They have done their homework to come up with buzz words and slogans that especially appeal to Millennials and Gen Zs.

If you spend time on social media, you will discover an unrelenting, and clever campaign against attempts to put restrictions on abortion. Recently, Congress passed a bill requiring doctors to try to save the lives of babies who somehow managed to survive abortions. Yet, this attempt to stop infanticide was termed "an extremist attack on the reproductive health of women." Pro-choice Senators called it, "a vicious attack on the Constitutional freedoms of Americans." Pro-lifers have been labeled "the American Taliban" who want to impose "Christian Sharia Law" and reduce women to nothing more than "breeders." An effective PR campaign has redefined pro-lifers as monsters and abortionists as the defenders of Civil Rights.

**3. Pro-choice PR frames abortion rights with stories and images that elicit compassion:** victims of rape and incest being forced to give birth; unwanted children raised in poverty; teen mothers whose

lives are ruined by unplanned pregnancies; severely handicapped fetuses being forced into this world to suffer agonizing, subhuman existences; horrific burdens forced on their families by unfeeling proliferators who are never around to help shoulder the cost. These extreme cases only account for a small percentage of abortions. Yet their stories and images appeal to Millennials and Gen Zs who are more susceptible to subjective feelings than objective truth.

**4. Pro-choice apologists have turned abortion into an issue of social justice.** The Website for the National Women’s Law Center has this headline: [ABORTION RIGHTS ARE INEXTRICABLY TIED TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE MOVEMENTS.](#) Their words succinctly sum up the social justice argument:

“The Supreme Court decision is about more than abortion. It’s about who has the power over you, who has the authority to make decisions for you, and who is going to control how your future turns out. Abortion rights and access are connected to so many of our other rights and fundamental freedoms. This includes our right to workplace justice, disability rights, LGBTQI+ rights, economic security, racial justice, and our right to safely care for our families, including access to affordable, high-quality child care.”

These four facts pose significant challenges for the pro-life movement. But they are not insurmountable. 1) Churches and their pastors must again wage spiritual warfare for the unborn. They need to arm their parishioners with the truth, teach them how to present it in an gracious, and relevant way, and then mobilize them to speak out in the public arena for those who have no voice.

2) We must win the public relations war. This means understanding how Millennials, Gen Zs, and Alpha kids think. We can’t change the truth, but we can package and communicate it in terms of compassion and social justice. St. Paul understood the culture of the pagan Greeks and Romans, and communicated differently with them than he did Bible-believing Jews in the synagogues. St. Peter said that we must be able to give a reason for our hope. But we must do it in ways that most effectively convince those who ask us. The truths we hold haven’t changed in 3,000 years, but the ways we communicated them in the 1970s and 80s won’t be culturally relevant in 2023. So let’s see how we can fight this war with better tactics.

3) We must show that the pro-life position is the compassionate one—for both the baby and its parents. 4) We must also make it an issue of social justice. That will speak more to Millennial, Gen Z, and Alpha

Generation children and grandkids than the arguments we've been using.

### **Christians must stand on their Certain Hope.**

The Apostle writes in 1 Peter 2:15, "Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope you have." Our hope is *certain* because it's from God. His Word is our final authority in every area of life. When talking about any issue like reproductive rights with our children, grandkids, or non-Christian friends, we may not lead with the Bible. But, we must stand on it. Too many Christians are wishy-washy on abortion because they don't know their Bible. So here goes.

- 1. "My Body, my Choice" is absolutely contrary to Scripture.** No one is autonomous. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, "You are not your own. You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Our heavenly Father owns us by virtue of creating us. God the Son owns us because he paid the price to redeem us. The Holy Spirit owns us because our bodies are the temples where he resides. Our bodies are not ours, and neither are our choices. Either Jesus is the Lord of all, or he is not the Lord at all. When it comes to "my body, my choice," we who are Christians must be radically counterculture!
- 2. The baby in the mother's womb is not part of the mother's body.** In Psalm 139, we see a breathtaking description of God making the unborn baby. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; *your* works are wonderful...my frame was not hidden when I was made in the secret place..." [vv. 13-15] God may use sperm and egg, DNA and chromosomes, blood, nutrients, and oxygen from the human parents, but the baby in the womb is his creation. The fetus is not an extension of the mother's body. Science confirms that, from the two-celled zygote, it is uniquely different than its mother. She did not create the baby. Nor did its father. Their part is amazing and invaluable. But they have no ownership. If she disposes of the baby, she is destroying God's masterpiece. He will hold her, and those who assist in the deed, accountable.
- 3. Conception begins before conception.** The arguments about when life begins are endless. Is it at conception, when the first heartbeat is detected? Or when the baby can live outside the womb? As technology advances, the target moves. Psalm 139:16&17 goes on to say, "Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious are your thoughts [about me], God!" The Psalmist is crystal clear: before we were conceived in our mother's womb, we were

conceived in the mind of our Creator God. His eyes saw us before we were formed into a two-celled zygote. He was thinking wonderful thoughts about us in eternity past. He ordained all our days even before that sperm and egg met in the mysterious moment of conception. God says to the prophet Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." [Jer. 1:5] How many prophets, artists, mothers, fathers, builders, inventors, and lovers have been eliminated by people who decided to undo God's plans?

- 4. God calls the killing of the unborn murder.** In Exodus 21, as Moses is defining all the ways people can murder, we read, "If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely...if there is serious injury [the death of mother or child], you are to take life for life." [vv. 22-23] Life is precious, and children are a gift from God [Ps. 127:3]. We are called to protect and defend them [Isa. 1:17 & Ps. 82:3]. Throughout the Old Testament, the detestable pagan practices of child-sacrifice are an abomination to the God of Israel. In the New Testament Jesus lets us know that it would be better to have "a millstone hung around your neck and cast into the deepest sea" than to harm a single child. [Mt. 18:1-6]
- 5. We are called to be the voice of the voiceless.** Again, Proverbs 31:8 says, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves." That is not an option, but a command. During the Nazi monstrosities, German pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil...Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." Bonhoeffer stood up to Adolph Hitler and his Third Reich. He was imprisoned and hanged. But he was never silent. None of us by ourselves can do everything we need to do to stop the monster. But together we can stand. And individually we can speak up for those who cannot speak. Jesus, who owns our bodies and our choices, calls us to go into all the world and proclaim his gospel. [Mt. 28:18-20] And his gospel is one that promotes life: from the womb to the tomb to eternity.

### **Christians must live out their Certain Hope.**

St. Peter says, "...give an answer for anyone who asks you..." [1 Pet. 3:15] We are not called to button hole anyone who will listen, and then blurt out the Gospel—even if they don't want to hear it. We are called to respond to those who ask. So, why would they ask us to give a reason for our faith? Quite simply because we live it. And it is radically different than anything they have seen from those ordinary people who just go with the culture flow. It is so extraordinary that they are compelled to ask why.

People were always asking Jesus questions. Why? Because his persona, words, and actions were so radical. He was not weird or strange. He was just different in a wonderful, revolutionary, counterculture way. Sadly, most Christians live lives that are carbon copies of most other folks. So people just shrug their shoulders. Or they say weird, judgmental, nasty things so that others avoid them at all costs. So how do we live pro-life in a pro-choice world?

- 1. Don't let your body make your choices.** During the recent pandemic, I heard Christians say, "Nobody is going to tell me what to do with my body. No one is going to make me wear a mask?" People actually left churches over a simple request to wear a mask in the service. Others actually split churches, and berated people who wore masks. When I heard these Christians say, "No one is going to tell me what to do with my body," I wanted to say, "Why don't you go across the street and join the pro-choice protesters with the signs that say, "My body, my choice." When people look at us they need to see a lifestyle that says, "My body is not my own, nor are my choices. I belong to God, first and foremost. I serve Jesus, first to last. The Holy Spirit guides my every step. The Bible, and not the U.S. Constitution, is my first rule for life. As a husband or wife my body belongs exclusively to my spouse. As a parent my body belongs to my children and grandchildren. My time, talents, and treasures belong to the least, the last, and the lost." Such a radical counterculture life will not only cause others to ask questions, but it will also give you credibility when you say to those you love most, "It's really not your body. Nor is it ultimately your sovereign choice."
- 2. Be willing to pay the price.** Why did they reject, abandon, and ultimately crucify our Lord? He became a clear and present danger to the culture of his day. If you live, act, and talk like Jesus, you will be the same. Jesus was crystal-clear in Matthew 16:24, "Before you can follow me, you must daily take up your cross." In our last session someone asked me, "What must we do to prepare for the great end times persecution predicted in the Bible?" Here's the answer. Take up your cross *now*. Be willing to be persecuted *today*. Deny your body when it offers you the easy, safe, or pleasant choice. Be willing to stand up for truth, and to pay the price for it in 2023. If you aren't able to be faithful in the good times when persecution is still relatively small, how will you do it when, like Bonhoeffer, your life is really on the line?

Please allow me to give you another illustration. The last time we met, my dear Christian sister Joanne challenged us during our

question and answer time. I didn't agree with everything she said, but I listened and learned. Some of you got offended and angry, But, may I suggest, if we can't even listen to brothers and sisters who disagree with our points of view, how will we ever listen to our children, grandchildren, or family members when they say really offensive things to us? If we can't listen, we will build walls that separate rather than gospel bridges that connect. How will we ever solve problems together if we remain polarized?

- 3. In disagreeing, we can't become disagreeable.** 1Peter 3:15 says that we must give *reasonable* answers for our hope "...with *gentleness* and *respect*." Frederick Nietzsche said, "When fighting dragons we must be careful not to become dragons ourselves." A godly warning from a godless man. We can't resort to carnal weapons to fight spiritual battles. We must fight the temptation to resort to power tactics to force others to submit to our way of thinking. We can't let anger fuel our passions. We must present the message of Jesus with the methodology of Jesus. I do not have to love the choices and lifestyles of my kids, grandchildren, or nonbelieving family, friends, and enemies. But Jesus says that I do have to love them the way he does.
- 4. We have to remember that Jesus alone transforms.** My job is to present the evidence. His is to change minds. That takes all the pressure off me. He may only want me to plant a seed, or water it, remove some rocks, or pull some weeds. But he alone produces the fruit. That means, I don't have to get angry, frustrated, or take it personally if people disagree with me. They aren't rejecting me, but instead are rejecting him. And, he is quite capable of taking care of himself. It's not on me to close the deal. I don't have to nag, cajole, badger, manipulate, or pressure others to conform to my way of thinking. Even if the whole world is falling apart, like Jesus in the storm, I can fall asleep in the bow of the boat even when everyone around me is going crazy with fear.
- 5. But we should expose the lies of the enemy.** St. Paul wrote, "We tear down arguments and every presumption set against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." [2 Cor. 10:5] We are the light that exposes the darkness. So we should listen carefully to pro-choice arguments and ask questions that lead those who hold them to where they see the flaws in their presumptions. We need to be sharp enough to pop balloons of illogical thoughts. We also need to remember that God's truths are compassionate, and figure out how to expose lies as uncompassionate. Finally, we need to

remember that God is the originator of social justice, and show how the lie is ultimately unjust to the least, the last, and the lost.

### **Finally, a few good reasons for your hope.**

The Apostle Peter says, “Always be prepared to give a reason...” [1 Pet. 3:15] We must be prepared with reasonable answers. Here are a few to get you started.

- 1. The science refutes the claim that the baby is an extension the mother’s body.** The new human zygote has a genetic composition that is unique to itself, different from any human that has ever existed, including its mother. The human zygote is composed of human DNA and other human molecules, and is undeniably human and not any other species. This DNA has a complete “design” guiding not only early development, but even hereditary attributes that will appear in childhood and adulthood, from hair, sex, and eye color to personality traits. The zygote immediately initiates a program of development that will, if not interrupted by accident, disease, or outside intervention, proceed seamlessly to birth, childhood, adolescence, maturity, aging, and death. By every definition of science, from its zygote beginning, that life inside the womb is unique, distinct, and human. “Not a person” is decidedly an unscientific argument
- 2. Roe v Wade was based on flawed law and outdated science.** In 1973 the US Supreme court ruled that the US Constitution allow for abortion based on “the right to privacy” of an individual. Yet, that right is nowhere found in our Constitution. Even progressive justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg famously said that the legal basis of Roe v Wade was flawed. The High Court also ruled in 1973 that an unborn fetus was not a person. Scientific advances have proven them to be hopelessly unscientific in their rationale. Pro-choice advocates may claim the support of the US Constitution, but it is nowhere to be found. Recently, at a pro-reproductive rights rally, Vice President Kamala Harris stated that our founding documents give us the rights to “liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” She conveniently left one out: **“life,** liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” If all humans have the right to life, and if babies are scientifically human, do they not have the same right to life that is essential to liberty and the pursuit of happiness?



- 3. The facts behind the polling data.** In an age where polls often determine public perception, the pro-choice people often claim that most Americans are in favor of abortion on demand. The truth is more nuanced. 61% of Americans believe it should be legal in the first three months, or in cases of rape, incest, or the life of the mother. More than half of Americans believe it should be banned after six weeks. 87% say it should be banned after six months. Only 6-17% say it should be legal at all times, under all circumstances.
- 4. The reasons for abortion.** The pro-choice Guttmacher Institute has conducted two major studies on why U.S. women have chosen to get an abortion. Only 1% did so because of rape or incest. Just 8% did so for their health or that of the mother. 97% were elective abortions by healthy women to end the lives of healthy babies. The top three reasons were 1) socioeconomic concerns; 2) to delay or space the birth of their children; 3) not wanting any more kids. These facts do not lend credence to the latest buzz words: “reproductive health.” This phrase is as Orwellian as the military dropping a bomb on civilians and then calling it “collateral damage.”
- 5. The ethics of abortion.** We should never talk about abortion without bringing up the name of Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood. She is the skeleton in the closet of Planned Parenthood, and they are doing their best to erase her memory. Margaret Sanger was a eugenicist in New York City in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. She wrote several books in which she lamented the birth rate of African Americans and other people of color. She saw them as inferior and a threat to white supremacy. It is irrefutable that she started Planned Parenthood to cut down on the birth rate of what she considered to be inferior people. Later, Nazi eugenicists studied her works and put them into action with their abortions, infanticide of the children of inferior races, the euthanasia of the handicapped, and the genocide of whole people groups.

Sadly, none of our social justice warriors have torn down her statue in New York, or demanded that her marble bust be taken down from the Smithsonian. Yet it is an undeniable fact that the highest percentage of women getting abortions are African Americans, Hispanics, and other women of color and lower socioeconomic situations. Again, last year in New York City, more African American babies were aborted than were

born. Ms. Sanger must be looking up from down below with a smile of satisfaction. We should ask pro-choice people if they are worried that the reasons behind today's abortions on demand will ultimately lead to what happened in the Nazi holocaust. Certainly, the past is a predictor of the future.

- 6. The social justice issue with abortion.** Pro-choicers are desperate to present a pro-women image. Yet women who have had abortions are rising up to share their stories of the devastation that resulted from them. The *Feminists for Life* group says, "Abortion is an admission that we have not yet met the needs of women." One of the good news bits to come out of the battle over abortion rights is that 1.5 million Gen Zs (not all of them Christians) are part of organizations that are fighting to end abortions as a social justice issue. They point out that abortion is an attack on minorities, women, and create an atmosphere that children are dispensable and therefore are put in more danger from predators. They point out the fact that 24.7 million children are growing up in homes without a father, and start out without the benefits necessary to be successful in life.

I have only scratched the surface. I didn't do it by trotting out the old moralistic arguments, but rather tried to give you an idea of how to talk to the next generations in ways that might resonate. You should study to come up with more reasons of your own. I have only jump-started your engine. We can no longer be silent in the face of the monster. Mother Theresa or Calcutta put it best: "Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what it wants."

*A talk given by Dr. Robert Petterson, Founder and President of Legacy Imperative Inc [legacyimperative.org] in his "Sharing Jesus in a 'Woke' Culture" series at Covenant Church of Naples, FL*

