

What does God say about the Sanctity of Life?

(Sanctity of Life Sermon)
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Main Idea – God so loves people that what starts out as a cell He wants as a child.

Every one of us would agree that one of the biggest mistakes in life can be addressing the peripheral issues but not addressing the deeper items. And it can happen in almost every area of life.

For example, when it comes to buying a home we begin to think, “Do we want to live within the city or in a suburb outside the city? Do we want to live where there is a nearby school where the children can attend, or a mall nearby where the parents can attend? Do we want a 2-story home without a basement or a one story home with a basement?” When actually, the question we might want to ask is, given our present financial limitations should we even be buying a home at all. Because if we were to be honest, we feel so poor that we don’t have money for what we have let alone what we want. I love the story in *Readers Digest* about the boy who was listening to his pastor say that money is not important in the afterlife because in heaven there is no money. The boy whispered to his mother, “Did you hear that mom – we’re already in heaven.”

When it comes to marriage we often ask if we should get engaged in the spring and put off the wedding until next year, or do we get engaged now and plan the wedding for next month? Do we spend the money we don’t have for a long honeymoon or do we spend the money we do have and have a short honeymoon? Do we get advice from our parents so they feel like they matter or do we make our own decisions so we make it clear to them that they don’t matter? But perhaps the question we ought to be asking is whether or not we’ve gotten to know the other person well enough to consider marriage in the first place. Someone has defined marriage as a phone call in the middle of the night. First there’s a ring, and then you wake up! A former Hollywood star was

noted for saying, "Sometimes I wonder if men and women really suit each other. Perhaps they should live next door and just visit every now and then."

When it comes to buying a car we ponder if we should lease a new one or buy it. Would it be better to get a second hand car with low mileage or a new one with no mileage? Do we get the kind of car we've always had or get the kind the neighbor has? When the question we ought to be asking is whether or not we should assume an added financial burden and instead just keep the car we have. After all, many have stated that the cheapest car you have is the one you're presently driving.

We often look at the peripheral issues and miss the deeper issues. One of the areas where we miss the deeper issues is an area more important than the home we live in, the place we go on our honeymoon, or the car we drive – as important as all of those are. It has to do with people; not one or two people but millions of people in every part of the globe. What I'm referring to can be expressed in four words – the sanctity of life. We discuss sexual sin and sexual purity. We discuss pro-life and pro-abortion. We discuss euthanasia or prolonging life through life support systems. But what we should be asking is, "How does God feel about the sanctity of life?" PERIOD. And notice, I did not say how do you or I feel, but how does God feel. Because there is not one verse in the Bible that speaks of God answering to men but there are many verses that speak of men answering to God.

A major league baseball player hit the ball far out in left field. Bases were loaded. The one who was on 2nd base made it all the way to home plate and he collided with the catcher. Immediately, the one team yelled, "He's safe, he's safe, he's safe." The other team yelled, "He's out, he's out, he's out". Upon looking at both teams the umpire calmly announced, "He ain't nothing til I call him." The issue is not how you and I feel about the sanctity of life, but it's how God feels. It's not how you and I call it, but it's how God calls it.

There are things in the Bible we don't understand and there are probably some things in the Bible we only think we understand. But there are some things in the Bible we cannot misunderstand. One of the things we cannot misunderstand is how God feels about the sanctity of life. God makes six statements that are impossible to misunderstand.

The first statement explains how the sanctity of life got started. It did not start in the mind of man; it started in the mind of God.

I. The sanctity of life was instituted by God because only humans reflect the glory of God.

We're told in Genesis 1:27-28, "So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

There are some that feel the reason God invented man was because He was disappointed in the monkey. But rest assured, the Bible declares that not to be true. The reason He created man is because it is humans that reflect His glory. The point is this; if you want to show people a picture of what God is like there is no one or nothing you can turn to except a human being. We can live, talk, and have fellowship with our Creator. He placed human beings on earth to represent His reign and to reign over all that He had made. That is one reason there can never be an idol to God to reflect His image. We are not an idol. We are a living image of Him and we're created in His likeness. We are made to reflect His majesty on the earth.

Look at creation around us – it gives glory to God. The redwood trees of California are majestic and some are so large that you could drive a truck through an opening at the bottom. The antelope of Colorado have eyes that are equivalent to a seven power binocular and at top speed they can run 70 miles an hour. The great fish of

the Caribbean are sometimes bigger than the boat you're trying to catch them in. Both the sun and the moon are to this day capturing the attention of scientists who are amazed by them. Although all of these give glory to God they were not created in His image.

The sanctity of life was instituted by God because only humans reflect the glory of God.

The second statement explains when God started to develop that image. It starts sooner than you may have thought.

II. God starts at conception to develop a child.

Psalms 139:13-16 reads,

"For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, *And that* my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, *When as yet there were* none of them."

David affirms that the work of God in his life extended back to when he was in his mother's womb. "You've covered me" means "you wove me together." That explains the work of God in creating the person in his mother's womb. "I'm fearfully and wonderfully made" means "I am an awesome wonder."

Now please, be careful that doesn't make you prideful as all of us have that tendency. I love the sign on a department store dressing room mirror that said, "Objects in mirror appear bigger than they actually are." As we look at ourselves we can be prone to think that we are bigger than we actually are.

“Skillfully wrought” is a very interesting phrase because the development of the fetus was quite a mystery to ancient people. To them, it was as though the fetus was being developed in the middle of the earth. “My substance” indicates the embryo. “In your book”, has the idea that the life of the person, the structure and meaning of the person’s life, was all established from the beginning by God and it was done in the womb. God starts at conception to develop a child.

Look at Jeremiah. Jeremiah 1:4-5 reads,

“Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.’”

Jeremiah was keenly aware of God’s call on his life that had been destined by God before conception. He quoted God as saying, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” *Knew him*, means God called him to perform a critical mission at a critical point in the history of the nation of Israel. Jeremiah was to be a prophet to the nation of Judah and a messenger of God to all nations. The fact is, God starts at conception to develop a child.

I love the story of the boy sitting on his father’s lap as they were looking into a mirror. The boy said to his dad, “Dad, who made me?” He said, “God made you, son.” He said, “Dad, who made you?” He said, “God made me, son.” He said, “Dad, who made granddad?” He said, “God made him, son.” He said, “Dad, who made great-granddad?” He said, “God made him, son”. “Why do you ask?” The boy took one look back in the mirror and said, “Well it just seems to me he’s been doing a better job in recent years!” Laugh as we might and should, the boy was right. God so starts at conception to develop a child that unborn children have detectable heartbeats at just 18 days.

The third statement explains even more that what is in the womb is from Him. So much so it expresses God’s feelings about children born with special needs.

III. Even when people are not perfect God acknowledges the fact that the one in the womb belongs to Him.

In Psalms 127:3, we read, “Behold, children *are* a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb *is* a reward.”

Children are God’s gift. In the day of the Old Testament children were a symbol of strength, just as an arrow was. This was particularly true in an agricultural economy since the extra number of children increased the productivity of the farm.

But understand that even if people are not perfect, God acknowledges the fact that the one in the womb belonged to Him. In Exodus 4:10-11, Moses is intimidated by what God is asking him to do to be used of Him to deliver His children from Pharaoh in Egypt. In verse 10 it reads,

“Then Moses said to the LORD, ‘O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I *am* slow of speech and slow of tongue.’”

Listen to God’s answer. In verse 11 it says,

“So the LORD said to him, ‘Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? *Have* not I, the LORD?’”

God reminded Moses that it was He who made Moses’ mouth. He has fashioned each individual according to His wisdom. He promised to instruct Moses of what to say as he went to see Pharaoh. God is saying, “I’m able to help those who are lacking and those who are imperfect.” God gave us our faculties from the beginning and even those who are imperfect come from Him. He told Moses, “I made the mute, the dumb, the deaf, the seeing, and the blind.” Even when people are not perfect, God acknowledges the fact that the one in the womb belongs to Him.

It is not His desire that someone be born mute, deaf, or impaired in any way. That's the result of being part of a fallen world. We're born imperfect, not perfect. Not a single person is born without a physical flaw and that's why from the time we're born we're on the path to death. But when a child is born deaf, to God be the glory. When a child is born mute, to God be the glory. When a child is born lame, to God be the glory. When a child is born with a heart problem, to God be the glory. That child is still from Him. God never says this one is not from me.

I love the way a person expressed this in poem one time when he said, "My father's ways may twist and turn. My heart may throb and ache. But within my soul I'm glad to know He makes no mistakes." Even when people are not perfect, God acknowledges the fact that the one in the womb belongs to Him.

The fourth point explains how severely God feels about the one He created in the womb. He is not just concerned about when the life starts, but when it stops.

IV. What God decides to start, He doesn't give us the liberty to decide when to end.

In Genesis 1:27, we're told, "So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." In Exodus 20:13 we're told, "You shall not murder." That shows you the kind of value God placed on a human life. In Exodus 21:22-25 we read,

"If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges *determine*. But if *any* harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

In light of the above, what God started He does not give us the liberty to decide when to end. The Planned Parenthood organization performed 270,000 abortions per year as of 2006. When people were asked why they had an abortion, 50% said they didn't want to be a single parent or had problems in current relationships; 66% said they could not afford the child; 75% said that it would interfere with their lives, and 95% said for reasons of convenience.

It's interesting to me that former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said that in his 35 years in medicine he has "never seen one case where abortion was necessary to save a woman's life." I read in the *Washington Post* that President Ronald Reagan once said he had read in the *Washington Post* about a young woman named Victoria. She was with child and said, "In this society we save whales, we save timber wolves, bald eagles, and coke bottles. Yet everyone wanted me to throw away my baby."

Now with all of that understood I want to make something very clear. If you've had an abortion please understand that with God there is forgiveness. Actress Patricia Neal died just recently. It was a known fact as she confessed that abortion of her unborn child in 1950 was the greatest sorrow of her life. She said in her autobiography, "If I had only one thing to do over in my life I would have that baby." Please understand that if you're like her, with God there is forgiveness.

With God, sin is sin. The way someone else abhors abortion is the way God feels about my sin in general. One person has unkind thoughts and another has a bitter tongue. We all have things in our lives that are dishonoring to God. But when God forgives you, He puts all things we've done wrong on a screen and then he presses the delete button.

You might ask, "But how can I forgive myself?" Please bear in mind that if it's not on His mind, it does not have to be on yours. God is a God of the future, not the past. He has a full-time business and it's called forgiveness. Once he tosses your sins

from His mind you can toss them from yours. But God wants us to know that what He decides to start, He doesn't give us the liberty to decide when to end.

The fifth statement God makes explains what He sees in the person He created. He sees something that separates us from Him.

V. He loves what He sees in the womb although the infant is sinful from the day it's conceived.

Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me." David recognizes as an unborn child he stood before God as a sinner because he reflected the sinful nature of Adam, the first person God ever made. He relates his sinfulness to the inception of life.

Psalm 58:3 tells us, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." The Psalm is addressing the wicked judges of Micah's day and notes the problem started from the womb.

Every one of us is a sinner. Frankly, we don't like to see ourselves that way. Will Rogers once made the comment, "I love to hear a man talk about himself. I hear nothing but good." Let me ask you a question. Who taught you how to sin? No one. You did a great job yourself. It's easy for us to blame our parents. *Readers Digest* told about a family that stopped buying junk food and replaced it with plain rice cakes. The mother and two children were not enthusiastic about the change. One evening the father went to the kitchen after the family was in bed and found his younger child smearing frosting on her rice cake. The father asked, "What are you doing?" The child responded, this is how we always eat them - mommy showed us." We like to blame our sin on others. But we have to forever take responsibility for our own sin.

But although the bad news is bad, the good news is good because there's a sixth thing God wants to say about the sanctity of life. It tells you just how much God loves life.

VI. God so loves life He wants everyone on earth to live with Him.

God not only loves us coming into the world but He wants us to be in His world forever. That is why one of the best known verses in the Bible, John 3:16 says,

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

We’re sinners from the day we’re born, and yet God loves us.

Because we are sinners we deserve to die. But Jesus Christ, the perfect son of God came into the world and took your sin and mine and placed them upon Himself and He died in our place. He was our substitute. He saved us by dying for us.

National Geographic once told about a recreational area in the West where some years ago a man took his young son fishing. He brought only one life vest along with him. When the boat capsized the man put the vest on his son and pushed him toward the shore. The last words his son ever heard his father say was, “I love you.” In other words, the father saved him by dying for him. He died as his substitute. Jesus Christ saved us by dying for us. He took the punishment for our sin, died in our place and rose again. All God now asks us to do is to receive His salvation as a free gift by trusting Christ to save us.

John 6:47 says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.” To believe means to trust, depend and rely on. A circus man in Buffalo, NY who was a tightrope walker was visited one afternoon by a family who knew him well. He was off duty so he asked a girl that was about 10 years old if she believed he could carry her across the tightrope and back again. The girl said, “Yes, I believe you can.” The circus man asked if she would trust him to do it. The girl said, “I’m afraid not.” He turned to her brother who was about 14 years of age and said, “Do you believe I can carry you across the tightrope and back again?” The boy said, “Yes, I believe you

can.” The circus again asked, “Will you trust me”? The boy said, “Yes, right now.” The circus man picked up the boy and carried him across the rope and back again. In other words the boy trusted him to do it.

God is asking us to come to Him as sinners, recognize Christ died for us and rose and put our trust in Christ alone as our only way to heaven. Not trusting our church attendance to save us, not trusting our good life to save us, not trusting our baptism to save us, not trusting Christ plus any of those to save us, but trusting Christ alone as our only way to heaven. The moment we do, God gives us eternal life as a free gift.

Conclusion

In other words God is saying six things about the sanctity of life.

- I. The sanctity of life was instituted by God because only humans reflect the glory of God.
- II. God starts at conception to develop a child.
- III. Even when people are not perfect God acknowledges the fact that the one in the womb belongs to Him.
- IV. What God decides to start, He doesn't give us the liberty to decide when to end.
- V. He loves what He sees in the womb although the infant is sinful from the day it's conceived.
- VI. God so loves life He wants everyone on earth to live with Him forever.

I can put everything God is saying about the sanctity of life in one sentence.
God loves people so much that what starts out as a cell He wants as a child. God loves people so much that what starts out as a cell He wants as a child.

Life begins at conception. The cell belongs to God. God is not simply delighted when that cell is conceived. He's even more delighted when the cell that was conceived

becomes a child of God and He loves every part of the process. He loves the cell. He loves conception. He loves the birth. He's absolutely thrilled when that cell that has become a child trusts in Christ alone as his only way to heaven.

If you want to know how God feels about the sanctity of life, look at three things; *conception -- the cradle -- the cross.*

At conception, God made it possible for life to **start**.

At the cradle God made it possible for life to be **seen**.

At the cross God made it possible for a life to be **saved**.

If you want to know how God feels about the sanctity of life, look at three things; conception, the cradle, the cross. At conception, God made it possible for life to **start**. At the cradle God made it possible for life to be **seen**. At the cross God made it possible for a life to be **saved**.

There are some things in the Bible we don't understand. Some things we think we understand. But some things we can't misunderstand. We cannot misunderstand how God feels about the sanctity of life. It can be captured in one sentence. **God loves people so much that what starts out as a cell He wants as a child.**

Colonel James Irving is a former astronaut who is part of the crew that made a successful moonwalk. He experienced the thrill connected with leaving this planet and seeing it shrink in size. He watched earth rise one day and thought how privileged he was to be a member of that unique crew. Then he began to realize the route back home and how many would consider him as a superstar, for sure an international celebrity. But he was humbled by the awesome goodness of God and he made this observation. "As I was returning to earth I realized I was a servant, not a celebrity. So I'm here as God's servant on planet earth to share what I've experienced that others might know the glory of God."

When it comes to sanctity of life God is the celebrity and we are simply His servants. The way he wants us to honor Him is by celebrating what He celebrates. God so loves people that what starts out as a cell He wants as a child. For that reason when the cell is conceived, let's applaud God. As the child develops in the embryo, let's applaud God. When that child is born, let's applaud God. As the good news of Christ is told to that child, let's applaud God. And when that person becomes a child of God, let's applaud God.

If we understand the sanctity of life as God presents it in scripture, from the time a person is a cell to when he becomes a child of God, is all applause to God.

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