

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: January 24, 2010

Title: God, the author and finisher of life

Text: Psalm 139:1-16

Theme: Life is precious and a divine prerogative. Only God gives life and only God can ultimately take life. It is His by right of existence.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

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Introduction:

As the primary teaching pastor of Waukesha Bible Church I am always growing in my understanding of my role and responsibility to God and to His people. My desire is to speak to timeless truths of the Bible and how they intersect with our current culture. This Sunday we are marking the 37th anniversary of the government's decision to legalize and subsidize abortion. In addition, last week as a nation we assigned a day to honor the work of Mark Luther King Jr. and racial equality. I would like to quote John Piper pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis Minnesota on this topic.

The way I've thought about abortion over the years as a preacher—and I'm mainly a preacher, one who has to speak about abortion in the context of worship from the Bible—is to relate it to God. We always devote one Sunday (the Sanctity of Life Sunday) to abortion and one Sunday to racial harmony every year. In fact, the Martin Luther King Sunday and the Sanctity of Life Sunday in American life come back to back. And I regard that as a wonderful providence, because usually the people that are passionate about racial diversity and racial harmony are not the same people that are passionate about abortion (and vice versa). But I want a church where everybody is passionate about both. So to preach on them back to back is really important. That they are both God issues is what I want to say year after year after year.¹

With this idea in mind, I will speak to the sanctity of life in our present study and racial harmony next week. I do not believe we can fully grasp the entire issue in one short discussion. But I do believe we can and should keep these truths in the forefront of our mission as we live inside and out the Story of God.

By way of clarification let me note two important words that will help shape our discussion. The first word is **apologetic**. An apology is a defense for what one holds to. It seeks to speak the truth and in so doing address the concerns raised by the antagonist. The second word is **polemic**. A polemic is an attack or offense against the antagonist. In the discussion on life and its termination by abortion or infanticide we can be “offensive” in our treatment by being less than gracious or loving. My intent is not to speak to the horrors of abortion (although I will) but to speak to the beauty and sanctity of life.

Let us not assume that the unbelieving media will ever provide a balanced approach or treatment of this subject matter. And although I believe we should seek to put in play government officials who support the biblical ideal, let us never assume that the government or this world is a friend to

grace. Always work from the context that we as the children of God are a part of the Kingdom of light and we currently exist in a hostile and warring environment. Never forget that Satan's seed is persistently and aggressive warring against the women's seed. The fight we are engaged in is fundamentally spiritual, not earthly.

The Storyline:

Unlike anything else created, only image bearers live forever. It is through the women's seed that God would bring into existence the Story's Hero. The devil is warring against the seed of the woman and he continues his activity through abortion and infanticide. The Bible believes only God authors life and only God finishes life. The issues of just war and capital punishment must be reserved for another study, but both must work from the premise that only God is the author and finisher of life, even if and when He chooses to work through secondary causation.

The Problem:

The problem of unwanted children exists because the serpent's seed wars against that of the women's. It is not enough for us to shout down those who war against life. We must be proactive by protecting and providing for life in our community of faith and in our community at large.

Questions:

1. Has the Church of Jesus Christ been historically pro-life or pro-choice?
2. What are your thoughts concerning the Church being apologists rather than polemicists with regard to the abortion issue?
3. Why should we not expect the media to be neutral on this issue?
4. Why is our right to life different than that of animals?
5. What is the most fundamental reason as to why abortion exists?
6. What is abortion?
7. Is the idea of abortion new in history?
8. Did the early church battle against abortion?
9. What is a defining court decision for the United States of America?
10. Can we be absolutely sure when life begins in the womb?
11. If in doubt, what should be our response?
12. How do the Scriptures view conception?
13. According to the Scripture who opens and closes the womb for pregnancy?
14. Is child abuse a by-product of a worldview that denies life before physical birth?
15. How did the nation of Israel view the offering of children to Molech?
16. Do the Scripture place the unborn child on the same legal plane as that of the mother?
17. What part does God play in the development of a child?
18. What does Adamic sin say as to the personhood of pre-birth children?
19. What are your thoughts of God's activity with pre-birth children (cf. Luke 1:41-44; Isa. 49:1, 5; etc)?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know that God is both the author and finisher of life.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose life.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of promoting and protecting life.

Outline:

I. How does the serpent war against the women's seed -- WHAT IS AN ABORTION?

I want us to put this entire discussion into its proper context. I apologize for the repetitiveness of my language but this is a battle between light and dark, between good and evil and between the promise of God to provide a seed and Satan's war to stop its fulfillment.

Pro-abortion - Definition

Pro-abortion is the belief in the right to choose to terminate a fetus (fertilized embryo). Pro-abortion is also a movement, which fights for the rights of women to have a choice to end unwanted pregnancies.²

Question: What is abortion?

Answer: Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy after conception. It allows women to put an end to their pregnancies, but involves killing the undeveloped embryo or fetus. For this reason, it is a very controversial subject in American politics.

Supporters of abortion rights argue that the embryo or fetus is not a person, or at least that the government has no right to ban abortion unless it can prove that an embryo or fetus is a person.

Opponents of abortion rights argue that the embryo or fetus is a person, or at least that the government has a responsibility to ban abortion until it can prove that an embryo or fetus is not a person.³

"An abortion is an induced termination of pregnancy in a manner designed to kill the embryo or fetus."⁴

II. The relentless battle against the women's seed -- ABORTION FROM AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

As I read through the Bible, I am noting how the serpent wars against the women's seed. It began in the Garden, continued with Cain slaying Abel, and mushroomed dramatically with the sons of God cohabitating with the daughters of men resulting in the corruption of the entire world. This warfare is notable and traceable throughout the Word of God. I will however simply note how in addition to the biblical record, history is marked by those who sought to destroy life.

Almost three millennia before Christ, the Chinese were prescribing the use of mercury to induce an abortion. An Egyptian medical papyrus of 1550 BC describes similar techniques.

“Plato, Aristotle and Seneca all maintained an abortive stance. Seneca, the Stoic philosopher who tutored the infamous Nero, boasted, ‘We destroy our monstrous children and also drown our children if they are weak or unnaturally formed.’”⁵

Public debate of the abortion issue has escalated dramatically since the January 22, 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*.

“We need not resolve the difficult question of when an unborn child actually becomes a human person, with a legal right to live.” “When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy and theologies are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer.”⁶

The government appears to hesitate on when the human child actually comes into existence. Our current president struggles as to when life is considered viable. Because there is doubt, they still do; when in fact, when there is doubt, don't. Many of you deer hunt. If you are not sure whether or not something is a deer do you shoot anyways? Probably not, if that “something” happens to be another human being, you are liable before the law for taking another person's life. If we do not know when life begins, should we not err on the safe side?

“The Alan Guttmacher Institute records that in 1972, a year before the Supreme Court issued the *Roe v. Wade* decision and Washington began to pay for abortions, only 12.9 percent of pregnancies in America ended in abortion. By 1976, the percentage had doubled to 23.1. The federal government by then was paying for a third of all abortions.”⁷

Rightly so, we can see how Satan rages against the promise of God in Genesis 3:15 and how this systemic hatred continues to manifest itself. In addition to all of this what does the Bible say about life itself?

III. Why human life is sacred -- ABORTION FROM A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

When does human life begin? What is life? Life has many facets (i.e. spiritual life versus spiritual death, eternal life, or physical life). However, life in this context will speak of that which is animated and not simply existing (i.e. animate [man] versus inanimate [rock]). And further more it will speak of life as bearing the image of God (i.e. man versus animal).

For the Biblicist, life begins at conception. Although this is a contested point, we will maintain that life begins at the moment of conception. It is here that we believe the material and immaterial

parts of man come into existence (i.e. Traducianism). Systematic theology calls this idea “traducianism”. This is in contrast to “creationism” (which suggests God immediately and directly corrects the soul).

One of the arguments for abortion is our inability to “scientifically” determine when a child begins to think and feel. The issue revolves around the defining of personhood. Do infants have personhood? What is personality? Personality is part of the image-bearing element in humanity. It thinks, chooses, and feels. It has the capacity for relationships and morality. It is cognizant of its own existence. The exercising of these qualities are not demanded to constitute personhood. The capacity for the exercising of these qualities is.

If this position is not maintained for the pre-birth child, then what of those who are comatose or exist in a vegetated state? “Personhood is not defined by function, but by essence.”⁸

Why does the Bible condemn abortion and infanticide?

- A. Children are viewed as an heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127:3; ‘Eve’ Gen. 4:1; ‘Rachel and Leah’ Gen. 29:31; 30:1, 2, 22; ‘Ruth’ Ruth 4:13; ‘Hannah’ 1 Sam. 1:5, 6)

Psalm 127:3 provides the basis for understanding how the Hebrew Scripture views children.

“Behold, **children are a gift of the LORD**, The fruit of the womb is a reward” (Ps. 127:3).

Children are described as a gift, an inheritance or heirloom. Children are to be seen as a precious gift. From the Hebrew Scripture it is clear how children are viewed as gifts from God.

In the Garden of Eden, Eve notes this principle in the birthing of Cain, her first born.

“Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, **‘I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD.’**” (Gen. 4:1).

Eve saw in the birth of Cain the fulfillment of promise and hope. I do not wish to speak more than the text but consider the great mystery of Genesis 29:31.

“Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and **He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren**” (Gen. 29:31).

It is this principle that causes Jacob to say to his wife Rachel . . .

¹“Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, ‘Give me children, or else I die.’ ²Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, **‘Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?’**” (Gen. 30:1, 2).

Consider the wording of Ruth 4:13.

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. **And the LORD enabled her to conceive**, and she gave birth to a son” (Ruth 4:13).

Hindsight shows us how from this birth David’s line would be established, and from it King Jesus. I do not believe the language of Scripture is simply pious speech. I believe God enables conception. As we will see He is the one who knits together the various parts to form life in all of its varied expressions.

The continued expression of how pregnancy happens is equally noted in 1 Samuel 1:5 and 6.

⁵“but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, **but the LORD had closed her womb**. ⁶Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, **because the LORD had closed her womb**” (1 Sam. 1:5, 6).

We know, after the fact, that Hannah would bring forth the prophet/judge Samuel. But in the context of the Story, Hannah’s existence is marked by pain and suffering. In the working of God there are many unanswerable questions and scenarios, but God knows why He opens the womb of some and closes those of others. God knows and sometimes that is the only hope and comfort we can have.

On August 31, 1993, I was listening to WWJ 950 AM at 9:10PM and I heard of a child who was beaten to death for wetting his bed. Doctors said his body was so bruised from past beatings that they could not count them all.

The facts about child abuse and neglect: today, there is no disease, natural disaster or trauma that is killing more children under four years of age than abuse and neglect.

Every day in the United States:

- Three children die from abuse and neglect.
- 43 percent are under 1 year of age.
- 86 percent are younger than 6 years of age.

In Wisconsin alone in 2005 (the most recent year for which statistics are available):

- 12 children died due to proven abuse or neglect.
- 1,271 cases of physical abuse were proven.
- 3,576 cases of sexual abuse were proven.
- 46 cases of emotional abuse were proven.
- 3,255 cases of neglect were proven.⁹

How is it that we have become so deplorable in our treatment of our children, in so far they become disposable? It is perhaps a cultural mindset, but a godless one nonetheless. We no longer

see conception and birth as gifts from God. Is God still opening and closing the wombs of our mothers? No matter how far we advance as a people with modern technology and the reproduction of life, there is still mystery, and ultimately pregnancy is a consequence of God's activity and will. God has established a context in which life is to be produced. The producing of life should always be in the framework of the marriage covenant. It is because of how the child and life is viewed that the killing of children was abhorrent in Israel.

B. The killing of children was abhorrent in Israel (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5)

"You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD" (Lev. 18:21).

² "You shall also say to the sons of Israel: 'Any man from the sons of Israel or from the aliens sojourning in Israel **who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones.** ³ I will also set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, **because he has given some of his offspring to Molech,** so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name. ⁴ If the people of the land, however, should ever disregard that man when he gives any of his offspring to Molech, so as not to put him to death, ⁵ then I Myself will set My face against that man and against his family, and I will cut off from among their people both him and all those who play the harlot after him, by playing the harlot after Molech'" (Lev. 20:2-5).

The 12th century rabbi Rashi, commenting on Jeremiah 7:31 stated:

Tophet is Moloch, which was made of brass; and they heated him from his lower parts; and his hands being stretched out, and made hot, they put the child between his hands, and it was burnt; when it vehemently cried out; but the priests beat a drum, that the father might not hear the voice of his son, and his heart might not be moved.

A rabbinical tradition attributed to the *Yalkout* of Rabbi Simeon,^[4] says that the idol was hollow and was divided into seven compartments, in one of which they put flour, in the second turtle-doves, in the third a ewe, in the fourth a ram, in the fifth a calf, in the sixth an ox, and in the seventh a child, which were all burned together by heating the statue inside.¹⁰

The logic and reason behind the destruction of children is significantly flawed. If children are viewed as gifts coming from God, then why would one turn around and kill the child?

C. The unborn child is put on an equal plane with his/her mother (Exod. 21:22-25)

²² "If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage, yet there is no further 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" (Exod. 21:22-25).

"From this passage, God makes no legal distinction between a person born and one not yet born. Both are of equal value to God."¹¹

"Mischief" Acown = "Uncertain derivation; hurt." If a child is born prematurely because of another's attack upon the pregnant woman, but no harm comes to the child, then a penalty shall be exacted from the perpetrator. However, if the child is born prematurely and harm comes to the child, then it shall be an 'eye for eye.'

D. God is involved in a child's prenatal development (Ps. 139:13-16)

¹³ "For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; ¹⁶ Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them" (Ps. 139:13-16).

God is the one who fashions our parts into the whole. Think about the implications of this for those whose existence is marked by significant physical or intellectual difficulties. God made them to be what they are. They are no less valuable or precious in the mind of God. They, like us, serve a very unique and distinct purpose. God wrote them into His Story and they are inevitably considerable channels of God's word and work to those who are touched by them.

E. Children are seen as born with sin (Pss. 51:5; 58:3; Rom. 5:12)

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5).

"The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth" (Ps. 58:3).

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned —" (Rom. 5:12).

"The Jerusalem Bible translates that sentence more graphically, 'I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception.' No man can be a sinner until he possesses a soul. David understood that he was a living soul from the moment of his conception."¹²

In the fall of Adam the entire race was plunged into sin. No one born of woman is exempt apart from the only begotten Son of God. Children inherit their fallen state from this Federal and

Seminal Headship. In passing, I believe children are accountable simply because they are of Adam's descent. I do not, however, believe children are responsible, and in this manner I believe those who cannot be held responsible for their sin are covered by God's justice in the cross. Yet my point is simple, only image-bearers sin, and since children are born with sin, children must be persons.

F. Unborn babies are humans (Luke 1:41-44) that appear to have a [non-salvific] relationship with God (Isa. 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5 [also note Job 10:8-12; Eccl. 11:5; Isa. 44:2, 24])

1. In Luke 1:41-44 the passage speaks of John leaping for joy within the womb at the presence of the Messiah. Question: How could John have known Jesus was within the womb of Mary apart from special revelation? How could he know and rejoice apart from the mental and emotional process? It is said that he was 'filled from the womb' (Luke 1:15).

⁴¹ "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, **the baby leaped in her womb**; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² And she cried out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? ⁴⁴ **For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy**'" (Luke 1:41-44).

2. Isaiah 49:1, 5 clearly indicates Isaiah's prenatal experience. Isaiah might not have been cognizant of the experience, but he fully acknowledges and recognizes that God was doing a work prior to his birth from the womb of his mother.

¹ "Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar. **The LORD called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me.** . . . ⁵ **And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant**, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength)" (Isa. 49:1, 5).

3. Jeremiah 1:5 "Before" **Terem** = "From an unused root apparently meaning to interrupt or suspend; properly, non-occurrence; used adverbially, not yet or before." God's omniscience and foreknowledge knew Jeremiah the prophet. He was fully aware of the man before his birth and was aware of the man throughout the birthing process.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5).

4. Note also the apostle Paul in Galatians 1:15, 16.

¹⁵“But when God, **who had set me apart even from my mother's womb** and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:15, 16).

I think we would do well to note the considerable mystery in what the Scripture is telling us in these passages, but I would also argue that something marvelous is happening between the knitting of life by God and the child’s development both physically and spiritually. How can we dismiss these ideas so casually and destroy what God is doing?

“The real question today is not when human life begins, but, what is the value of human life?”¹³ Do we value human life as it is found in our children? How do we treat our children or the birth of a child? Is it a celebration or burden? Are we anxious to spend time with our children or are we happy to see them go? Are we contented to see our children trained by our churches, schools, day cares, etc.? How much actual input do we have in the lives of our children on a daily ongoing basis? If you are like me, we need to make some new resolves.

The laws that govern our land tell us, “If the taking of the child is involuntary, then the child has constitutional rights and it is manslaughter. If the taking of the child is voluntary, then the child has no constitutional rights and it is legal.” What hypocrisy.

The Bible celebrates life by dealing severely with those who take the life of those who are innocent. God will not hold them guiltless who shed innocent blood. The Proverbs tell us He hates those who do so (Prov. 6:16, 17) and the Law says He curses those who kill innocent people for money (Deut. 27:25). Only God has the right to terminate life. He creates all life whether *normal* or with severe mental, physical, or emotional handicaps (Exod. 4:11; John 9:2, 3).

Shepherding the Sheep: (What’s the NEXT STEP?)

1. The Bible clearly teaches the sanctity of all life. We must think long and hard as to how we speak for life and gracious speak to the issue of death.
2. The taking of life out of convenience or hardship is murder. And neither we nor our nation can forgo its culpability before God.
3. We must speak for life and guard against a culture of death. It is now for us to prayerfully figure out how we can minister to our immediate community of faith and to our community at large.

¹ <http://www.christianity.com/Home/Christian%20Living%20Features/11596702/>

² <http://www.allaboutpopularissues.org/pro-abortion.htm>

³ http://civilliberty.about.com/od/abortion/f/what_abortion.htm

⁴ *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 4)

⁵ David Beale, "Ancient Attitudes towards Abortion," *Faith for the Family*, January 1982, 5, 6 [excellent article on abortions history].

⁶ Supreme Court, *Roe v. Wade* 1973

⁷ David Gergen, "Clinton's Abortion Problem," *U.S. News & World Report*, April 19, 1993, p. 74.

⁸ Francis J. Beckwith, "Abortion and Public Policy: A Response to Some Arguments," *JETS*, December 1989, Vol. 32, No. 4, p. 508.

⁹ <http://www.chw.org/display/PPF/DocID/28192/router.asp>

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moloch>

¹¹ Beatrice Ward, "A Biblical View of Abortion," *Faith for the Family*, January 1982, 4

¹² Beatrice Ward, "A Biblical View of Abortion," *Faith for the Family*, January 1982, p. 4

¹³ Ronald Reagan, *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*, 22.