

Looking out to the unborn and their parents

February 22, 2009 – Various Texts

What is the answer to these situations?

- 1) A high school couple has been going out for awhile. The relationship progresses. The young woman becomes pregnant, she is 16. The young man wants nothing to do with the situation. What can she do?
- 2) A woman struggles with an anxiety disorder. But she's finally experiencing a measure of health. She even starts going out with a guy from work. They become serious and intend to marry. Then she becomes pregnant. She is at first excited but as she begins to think about the implications, her anxiety problems rear their ugly head. What can she do?
- 3) A college age couple has been going out for 1 year. He studies to become an accountant. She wants to become a lawyer. They plan to marry and have children *after* they establish solid careers. They find out she is pregnant. They cannot fathom how they would fit a child into their plans? What can they do?
- 4) A couple looks forward to the arrival of their first child. They anticipated children for years. They go through the normal

routines of ultrasounds and pre-delivery tests. 4 months into the pregnancy their Obstetrician comes into the office with a serious look on her face. "Mr. And Mrs. Jones, I'm sorry to have to tell you this but your baby has a severe case of Down syndrome.

There are problems with the child's organs and heart. You can anticipate the child requiring constant care as long as it lives."

What can this couple do?

- 5) A woman finishes her nursing shift at the Royal Alec Hospital. While standing at a lonely bus station late at night, a predator waiting in the woods grabs her. He takes her into the bushes and assaults her. In the next days her trauma is magnified with the discovery that she is pregnant. What can she do?

What might you do if you were in those situations? What might you say to someone in those situations? Our society has come up with a solution that is offered for each of these scenarios. It's called abortion or termination of the pregnancy.

Did you know it has been 21 years since the Supreme Court of Canada legalized abortion? The Canadian Federation for Sexual

Health celebrates that decision in a news update on their website. It states

January 28, 2009 marks the 21st anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in Canada which ruled that legislation against abortion infringed on rights set out by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Between 1969 and 1988, Canadian law stated that abortions could be performed in a hospital if a committee of doctors decided that continuing the pregnancy could endanger the mother's life or health.

In his 1988 decision, Justice Dickson found that the law violated Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it infringes upon a woman's right to "life, liberty and security of person."

Canada is now one of a small number of countries without a law restricting abortion. An abortion is now treated like any other medical procedure and is governed by provincial and medical regulations.

*The Canadian Federation for Sexual Health supports a woman's individual right to choose and obtain an abortion and celebrates the anniversary of this Supreme Court decision.*¹

Our society speaks loudly about one of its solutions to unwanted pregnancy. Abortion advocates now has 21 years of legal backing to emphasize this solution. But silence is not an effective response for anyone who questions the legitimacy of this solution. Silence can be interpreted as acceptance or agreement. A Christian response must be balanced between speaking up for life and speaking with grace. It must keep both truth and love in mind.

This hit home to a pastor who preached on abortion. He hammered away at the evil of abortion and the need for the church to

stand up for life. He received many compliments after the message for "telling it like it really is." Then as he wrapped things up in his study just before heading home, a young woman stood in the doorway of his office. "Pastor?" she said. "Yes," he answered. "I heard what you said about the evil of abortion today." "Good," thought the pastor. "Here's a young person who's catching the message." But then she dropped the bombshell.

"But I just wanted you to know that you clarified something for me today. You see, I had an abortion a couple of years ago. I've been struggling ever since. I wondered if God hated me or if I could ever tell anyone. According to you, I am one of the most evil people in the world. I guess God has rejected me forever. You've confirmed that. I just wanted to let you know I won't ever be back." Before he could respond, she left never to be seen again. After wiping away his tears, that pastor confessed that he would never preach about abortion again without emphasizing the grace, forgiveness and strength of Christ for all involved in these circumstances.

¹ http://www.cfsh.ca/About_CFSH/News-and-Events/news01280902.aspx

So today I invite you to come with me and wrestle with this issue; away from the media and lobby groups and demonstrations to spend some time pondering God's perspective on this issue.

I speak acknowledging my limitations. I am a man who speaks to an issue that affects women greatly but not only women. I am not an expert in medicine so I am not going to speak about those aspects of the debate. I do want to offer a survey of relevant Biblical passages that will help us respond in an encouraging and healing way. I believe we are called to respond to the reality and opportunity for ministry to a community and nation that now has lived through one generation of legalized abortion.

To do this, I will first present what may be considered an argument for abortion. Then I will offer you a Christian approach to unwanted pregnancy. Finally, we will look at how we, the church, can respond with concern for: all involved. Follow along in the outline in the bulletin.

The Argument for Abortion

First, let us consider the rationale offered for abortion. The late Stanley Grenz, in his book *Sexual Ethics* summarizes the argument for abortion in this way.²

1. Abortion accomplishes humanitarian goals.
 - 1.1. It fights against overpopulation
 - 1.2. It guards against severe genetic retardation
 - 1.3. It can minimize the effects of criminal acts such as rape and incest, for it prevents the original injustice to require more of the victim. Abortion frees her from the suffering of giving birth to a child conceived in an act of violence.
2. It shows proper consideration for women.
 - 2.1. Liberalization, it is argued, replaces illegal, dangerous abortions with safer, legal abortions. (You'll often see signs in pro-abortion rallies with a clothes hanger crossed out. That is in reference to the back alley practice of 50-100 years ago where illegal abortion providers would initiate the abortion by inserting a wire clothes hanger into the woman. Women sometimes died from such procedures and legalized abortion protects a woman from such dangers.

² "Sexual Ethics: A Biblical Perspective," Stanley Grenz, Vancouver:Word, 1990

2.2. Proper consideration for the total health of women, would allow for the abortion option not only when life itself, but also psychological well-being is threatened by continued pregnancy.

2.3. A mother has a fundamental right to a private decision as to whether or not to bear her child.

3. It shows equal justice to all

3.1. Strict abortion laws discriminate against the poor and minorities, who are less likely to have the resources needed to obtain access to abortion should they elect that option. The rich will always have access to that option; the poor will not.

A Christian Response to Unwanted Pregnancy

Now there are counterarguments for each of these points. Some of the debate focuses on when does life actually begin. Others ask whose right are most important – the unborn child or the mothers? Some of the arguments focus on the danger abortion poses. But I want to focus on the bigger picture here from a Biblical Perspective. There are 3 fundamentals we must remember to bring some focus to this painful

and emotional issue. These are basic Christian beliefs that certainly our society and some in the church have forgotten.

Fundamental #1: God created life and rules over His creation.

Consider some Scriptures that testify to this truth.

Genesis 1:26-27 - ²⁶ *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

²⁷ *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*

Genesis 2:7

⁷ *The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

Psalm 139:14-15 –

¹⁴ *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.*

When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
¹⁶ *your eyes saw my unformed body.*

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Acts 17:24-25

²⁴ *“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵ And*

he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

The Christian response must come from the fundamental belief of a world under God's authority. It must recognize that all value and meaning in life ultimately flows from the Sovereign Lord.

So we have a different filter through which we look at the world. This causes us to come to very different conclusions about the situations we talked about earlier. The same world looks different to us depending on the setting of our worldview. Those who don't believe in God or see Him as irrelevant see the world ruled by humans. Therefore humans need to decide what is best. So when an unwanted pregnancy comes along, you deal with that unwanted problem. Abortion is a natural conclusion of that worldview. As Christians, we need to put on the lens that Scripture provides showing us that God is the Sovereign over the world and creator of life. When an unwanted pregnancy comes along, our vision of God as Ruler and Creator must greatly influence the decisions we make. That's one fundamental we must keep in mind when addressing this.

Fundamental #2 – The Christian values serving others more than personal rights.

This is a tough one especially since we live in a country gripped by the “Charter of Rights.” Certainly human rights are important. In fact, despite common misconceptions of the Bible, it champions “rights” for the most vulnerable members of society, women, children, the poor. But a “rights” focus goes too far if it is not checked by a servant heart. Jesus spent His entire ministry trying to get the disciples to forego their own rights so they could serve others. Then Jesus displayed this by laying aside his right to life so that others might have life. Grenz says “Because of a world-view of a cosmos under God, the Christian is not in a position to argue inherent or built-in rights, whether they be rights of the unborn or the mother. Rather, a believer can only speak concerning servanthood, love and self-sacrifice. If serving is the primary concern of the Christian, whose rights are more important is not even a consideration.”

Several passages in the Bible speak of the Christian responsibility to serve or consider the needs of the weak.

- Romans 15:1-4 - We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let

each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” 4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (ESV)

- 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – “And we urge you brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”
- Acts 20:35 – In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Paul).

Christians can never take abortion lightly or view it as an easy solution to social problems. On the contrary, we appeal to the teaching and example of Jesus, who calls on the “strong” to sacrifice personal “rights” for the sake of the weak. This means that a Christian woman willingly sacrifices her “rights” for the sake of the one who is developing in her womb. A young Christian man who has gotten a girl

pregnant sacrifices his “rights” to freedom and instead makes major adjustments in his life to take responsibility.

The church offers help to those weakened by unwanted pregnancies. We help those weakened to carry a child to term because the world bombards them with ways out. We help those who want to run from responsibility to face responsibility and get them on their feet. After all, where would we be if Jesus had decided not to bear with our weakness? When we are weak, don’t we appreciate those who bear with us in our weakness?

Friends, I cannot imagine the incredible challenge women and families face with unwanted pregnancies. I have not been there. So I can only point you to Jesus’ example. He set aside personal rights for others. He was a servant. As Christ followers, we are to imitate Him.

A Christian perspective must start with the belief that God is ruler and creator. It continues with recognition that we value serving others more than personal rights.

Fundamental #3: Christians must show concern and assistance to all involved in unwanted pregnancies. Our concern cannot cease

with the unborn. It must also extend to all involved in these unique situations.

That means we need to show concern *for a woman with an unwanted or difficult pregnancy* and extended family. Grenz writes, “Often the Christian community has been perceived as being concerned for the unborn but not for those bearing unwanted children; it has been tragically guilty of casting shame on victims of sexual crime or on young girls who sought affection by giving themselves away.

This attitude stands in stark contrast to Jesus’ response to the adulterous woman. (John 8:1-11) The Christian community ought to administer God’s forgiveness and healing to all in distress.

In other words, we’ve got to say to girls and women in crisis, “we want to support you where you are. We want you to know we love you. We want to offer people who will pray for you and walk with you. We want to connect you with the Pregnancy Care Center.” We must support, encourage and embrace extended family members with prayer, a listening ear and offers of help.

Our compassion and concern also *needs to extend to those hurting friends who have gone through with an abortion and those have assisted another in having an abortion.* Sometimes they struggle with a great sense of loss. They might go through agony at the anniversary of death of unborn child. They know how old the child would be at the time. They may feel far from God. Many have turned away from the church after receiving condemnation or fearing it.

I found a story on a website called “Peace after abortion.” This is a non-Christian pro-abortion group that seeks to support those who struggle after having an abortion. It contains several stories of how a counselor helped women overcome their negative feelings about their abortions. But this story was different.

Manuela became pregnant as a teenager. This alone was a source of shame to her, because she was a practicing Catholic and believed that premarital sex was a sin. She compounded her sin by having an illegal abortion. She did it because she had been certain that if her parents found out she was pregnant, they would be terribly disappointed in her.

When she married in her twenties, she was too ashamed of the sin the abortion represented to her to tell her husband about it. They tried for several years, but had difficulty conceiving a child. Manuela was convinced that God was punishing her for having the abortion. She felt harmful to her husband because her punishment now hurt him as well, and she was lying to him by not telling him it was all her fault.

She eventually conceived and had a difficult pregnancy and dangerous childbirth in which she almost died. She took this hardship as proof that she had to pay dearly to make up for her sinfulness.

She had been burdened with her sense of sinfulness, of separation from God, for thirty years.³

The story ends there! There was no resolution. No report that Manuela is moving forward. That young lady needs the Gospel. She needs grace and strength to move forward in forgiveness and wholeness. Nora Kennedy of the Pregnancy Care Center wrote this to one of our prayer chain coordinators about the Abortion recovery ministry. *We need ongoing prayer for our Abortion Recovery Centre ministry. We need protection as we seek to move forward for the glory of God, to set people free from their chains of self-hatred, shame and guilt.*

We also need to show concern for our young people and others who don't know God's. We need to engage in preventive caring ministry. So we must speak honestly with our young people about God's standards in these areas. We don't condone abortion. We don't condone pre-marital sex or extra-marital sex because God's standards in Scripture are clear. He calls His people to purity and abstinence to

those not married. He created and ordained sex to be a beautiful gift within marriage. He laid it out that way not to punish or be a kill joy. He designed it so we could experience love in so many different ways. He puts forth this standard to protect us from all the pain, turmoil and complexities that come with sex outside of marriage.

Sex outside of marriage is wrong in God's eyes. So we need to focus on what God calls us to rather than what we can't do. That means we ask for His strength, grace and help to aim for purity. We need to hold purity up as wonderfully attractive and great blessing that God has laid out for us.

But how do we do that in image based sensually saturated culture? I've shared with some of you the red truck example. I want everyone here to not think about a red truck. Remove thoughts of a red truck from your mind. Don't think about a red truck. Will you stop thinking about a red truck please? Do you see what happens? If we keep focused on what we *can't* do, it will cause us to think about it more.

God provides the alternative, His greater good for every sin we face. So would you think about a yellow car? Can you focus on a yellow car? I want you to picture a yellow car? The red truck leaves

³ <http://www.peaceafterabortion.com/manuela.html>

our mind. The yellow car becomes our focus. The red truck is sex outside of marriage. The yellow car is purity.

Our challenge is to keep focused on the yellow car in a society that bombards with red truck images. Our responsibility as parents and as a church is to hold up the yellow car of purity in our own lives, choices, speech and teaching. Young people, you have a great opportunity to learn about the yellow car. Pastor Justin will be holding up purity and the Bible's teaching on it in the 180 Wednesday Bible Study. Watch for the launch date of that study. If you're not part of 180 now, you need to be there for this. We need to show compassion and give clear teaching to each other in this sexually saturated society.

But we must also proclaim the Gospel to those who have stumbled fallen. Yes, wrong has been done whether it be sex outside of marriage or abortion. But in and through Christ, there is healing, forgiveness and mercy. God loves you and cares about you. God pardons sin. Coming to God is the answer to crushing anguish and the source of strength to move forward in forgiveness and healing.

So how might we respond to all we've heard today?

If you have had an abortion, or helped another in having an abortion:

The first step in real healing from this event is an admission of doing wrong. Abortion rights groups and humanistic counselors can do all they can to help you justify your decision. But in fact, they harm your relationship with God for abortion is a violation of God's way to life. Bible Scholar Elizabeth Achtemeier writes "A pastor-friend tells of a woman who had undergone an abortion. Like so many who obtain abortions, she became deeply troubled by what she had done. She sought help from a counseling center and from various friends. They made excuses for her and left her burdened with guilt. Finally, she turned to the pastor of a local church and told him of her unease. 'You have done wrong,' he said to her. She replied in relief and tears, "THAT's what I wanted to hear!" At that point, repentance took place, and she could receive the forgiveness of the Gospel. Until someone clearly announced that the woman had done wrong, healing could not begin.

We do not help people by overlooking or denying sin. Rather we leave them victims of guilt, with no way for their shattered relations

with God to be healed by His merciful forgiveness, with no way for their old lives to be transformed by God's grace and made new."⁴

Once you have admitted that you have done wrong, you need to know that the cross is here for you. It was at the cross that the penalty for that sin was paid. It is through the blood of the cross that you can be forgiven. It is through the power of the resurrection that you can find new life in Christ. We want you to know that we as a church want to support you in gaining healing. Whether it be through prayer, counsel or support to seek further help, we want you to know that we want to be there for you. Please speak with Nora or another Christian you trust about this.

If you're pregnant with an unwanted child or know someone dealing with an "unplanned" pregnancy:

We would like to offer you the support of the church family through the pregnancy. Abortion is not your only option. Before you make that irreversible choice, please talk to one of the pastoral staff or church leaders us or someone you trust to discuss the many other options that are available to you.

To Look out in Prayer and Ministry to the unborn and their parents:

- Confess hatred and vilification to those involved in abortion rights. (Matthew 5:43-48).
- Confess any condemning, judgmental, simplistic, condescending attitude towards unwed mothers or those who have participated in abortion.
- Give to the Pregnancy Care Center – We already do so through our church budget. But you might want to incorporate this ministry into your charitable giving.
- Pray for protection for the Pregnancy Care Center.
- Join me for a prayer walk in and around the Pregnancy Care Center – Wednesday, March 4.
- Check out ways you might help at the PCC.
- Speak up for God's way in the circles in which you live.
- Make others aware of the abortion recovery center.
- Offer God's truth, forgiveness and healing to those around.
- Speak to you Principal about PCC's wait training.
- Adopt an unwanted child.

But we cannot be silent. We need to be messengers of life in a world that promotes death as a solution. Those situations I first mentioned were very tough problems. But abortion is not the solution. It only compounds the problem. May God grant us strength to offer His solution of forgiveness, grace and support through us His people.

⁴ "Speaking the Unspeakable: A Demonstration," Elizabeth Achtemeier, The Right

Choice, Paul Stallworth, Ed., Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1997, p. 25.