

LIGHT



Summer 2021
Volume 7, Issue 1

KINGDOM • CULTURE • MISSION

THE ROAD TO ROE50



THE FUTURE OF

THE PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT



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Life is Precious

Babies are beautiful. There is a reason joy springs from our hearts when we learn that a friend is pregnant. There is a reason we are moved after hearing a child's heartbeat in the womb via ultrasound. There is a reason we love to see images of a mother holding her newborn. And there is a reason we smile when we unexpectedly encounter a new baby.

All of this happens because babies are beautiful.

But their beauty is much more than physical. Sure, we love to see the chubby cheeks or hear the infectious laugh of an infant. Who doesn't? But the reason we love babies isn't actually their looks or laughter or the thought of them in a cute onesie, as wonderful as these things may be. The true reason is much deeper. We love babies because their little lives testify to a reality all of us know intuitively: life is precious.

This issue of LIGHT is about that reality. As evangelicals, we embrace and affirm the Bible's teaching about the sacredness of human life. Human beings matter because we bear God's image. And bearing the image of our Creator is no small thing. At a minimum, it means that every person, at every stage of life, has intrinsic and inestimable worth and dignity.

Sadly, nowhere in our culture is life more imperiled than in the womb. For almost 50 years, the United States has lived under the dark shadow of *Roe v. Wade*, the infamous Supreme Court ruling which opened the floodgates for on-demand abortions nationwide. But thankfully, that ruling has not gone unchallenged. In the intervening years, courageous Christians have joined arms with other passionate defenders of life to step into that darkness and counter it with a message of light and hope.

Across nearly five decades, the pro-life movement has grown into a comprehensive and flourishing effort to combat the culture of death with the positive vision of life. The movement has mounted countless legal challenges to America's abortion laws. And we continue to pray for legal victories to bring an end to the state-sanctioned slaughter of innocent children. But in addition, the pro-life movement has also met the cold and callused work of the abortion industry with a loving and hospitable pro-life alternative for women, children, and families in need of care and support.

This issue revisits the history of the pro-life movement, takes stock of the present, and dares to dream about a future after *Roe*. Within these pages you'll find articles and essays from members of our team here at the ERLC, interviews with those on the front lines of pro-life ministry, and information about ROE50, where thousands of believers plan to gather in our nation's capital to commemorate this tragic milestone and further the work of ending abortion in our lifetime.

We are working toward a day when abortion is not only illegal but unthinkable. Will you join us?



JOSH WESTER

EDITOR, LIGHT MAGAZINE



AND WE CONTINUE
TO PRAY FOR LEGAL
VICTORIES TO BRING
AN END TO THE
STATE-SANCTIONED
SLAUGHTER OF
INNOCENT CHILDREN.

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LIGHT

Light Magazine
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Books

1 Help Her Be Brave: Discover Your Place in the Pro-Life Movement

by AMY FORD

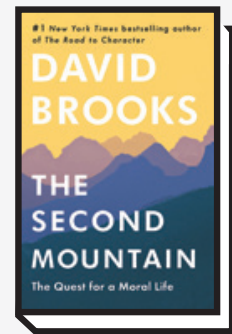
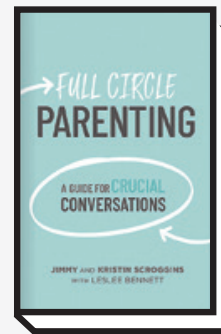
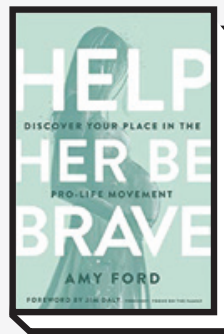
When I first met Amy Ford, I was overcome by her fierce passion and love for women facing unplanned pregnancies. As someone who grew up thinking the only way to serve in the pro-life movement was to stand in a picket line or to write a letter to my senator, Ford's pro-love message caught me off guard and transformed the way I think about being pro-life. In her book, Ford casts a vision that everyone within the church can help abortion vulnerable women be brave and know and experience the love of Christ. Her belief that "if abortion became illegal today, the church would not be ready" (15) is convicting. Each chapter is filled with simple and practical ways to compassionately show these women the love and grace of Christ. She shows even the most unlikely pro-life advocate how they can use their time and talents to serve women and help them be brave.

-ASHLEE GARCIA

2 Full Circle Parenting: A Guide to Crucial Conversations

by JIMMY AND KRISTIN SCROGGINS

This is a parenting book grounded in the gospel and authored by a couple that has a great deal of experience when it comes to parenting. Jimmy and Kristin Scroggins are the right people to address this crucial topic, and they do so exceptionally well. This book takes difficult topics, explores them biblically, outlines how to talk about the issues with children, and offers helpful principles throughout. The book is concrete, thoughtful, and will be a mainstay in churches and homes for many years to come. -DANIEL PATTERSON



3 The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life

by DAVID BROOKS

One of the lessons many of us learned, albeit painfully, during the pandemic is that we weren't created to live life in isolation. In other words: we need community. In his latest book, David Brooks says the key to living a fulfilling life is found in leaving behind a self-centered, individualistic life and pouring ourselves into a life committed to family, faith, a vocation, and community. Brooks' book is beautifully written and will spur the Christian reader on to pray about how the Lord would lead toward a more satisfying life focused on his glory and our neighbors' good.

-LINDSAY NICOLET

Why Are We Fully Pro-Life?

A REVIEW OF *THE DIGNITY REVOLUTION: RECLAIMING GOD'S RICH VISION FOR HUMANITY*

Jenn Kintner

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, pro-choice advocates protested and graffitied my church because of our conviction that life begins at conception. As a child, arriving on Sunday to expletives painted all over my church made visible to me the war against human dignity.

Years later we had another protest, but this time it was by Fred Phelps and Westboro Baptist Church. A transgender high schooler in our area had been beaten to death, and Phelps planned to picket his funeral. Westboro celebrated homosexuals burning in hell, so the local newspaper called my dad and asked, “You’re Baptist; they’re Baptist; is this what you believe?”

My dad answered, “No,” and explained his traditional, biblical view of marriage, but said he would never rejoice at anyone’s time in hell. He explained the gospel was good news for everyone, inviting every sinner alike, including my dad, to believe and repent. Outraged by this message, Phelps and his band traveled to our church with repulsive picket signs displaying inappropriate images and slurs.

Once again, I saw a war on human dignity, but this time it was from people who claimed Christ.

Even with my dad’s pro-life example, I didn’t have a theological basis for what I believed, and my application of human dignity was inconsistent. I began to see this and wanted a full-fledged, consistent theology that met the ethical questions of my day and influenced how I treated others. I wish I would have read Daniel Darling’s *The Dignity Revolution* when I was a young adult, because it does just that in a compelling and thought-provoking way.

THE NEED FOR A DIGNITY REVOLUTION

Assaults on human dignity are not something of the past. Darling writes, “We live in a world of terrible, daily assaults on humans, from war to famine to sexual assault to poverty, from the earliest stages of life to the last” (15). Acknowledging this, Darling calls for “a recovery of the robust Christian doctrine of human dignity” (15). He writes so that everyday Christians will see the inherent dignity in every human being and live accordingly (18).

A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Darling begins examining human dignity by considering God’s creation of man in his image, what was lost in the Fall, and what is being restored in Christ. Our dignity is rooted in the fact that we were created by God and is not based on utility—how we resemble him in what we do—but on being made in his image (43).

Though we were created in the image of God, that image was marred by the Fall. But while we are corrupted by sin, “our status as image-bearers always remains intact” (42).

And the good news is that what has been broken is being restored in Christ. The church’s task in that mission is to “announce to image-bearers who have rejected their Maker that he has visited them, defeated sin, death and the grave, and offers restoration to their original God-given purpose of glorifying him” (53). The church proclaims this good news, but is also called to display it in our actions (54).

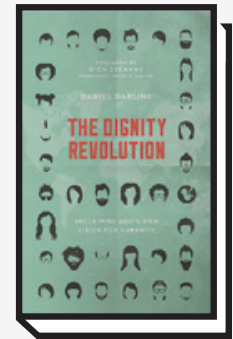
EXPLORING THE APPLICATIONS

This theological foundation prepares the church to engage the culture around them, including the following issues: racism, abortion, justice systems, immigration, healthcare, work, sexuality, technology, pluralism, and politics. Darling addresses each of these topics in the second section of the book in a thoughtful and convicting way and writes, “at times you will feel validated, and at times you will feel uncomfortable. This is as it should be, for none of God’s people are yet perfect, and all of God’s people are ‘sojourners and exiles’ till Christ returns to renew and restore all things (1 Peter 2 v. 11)” (16).

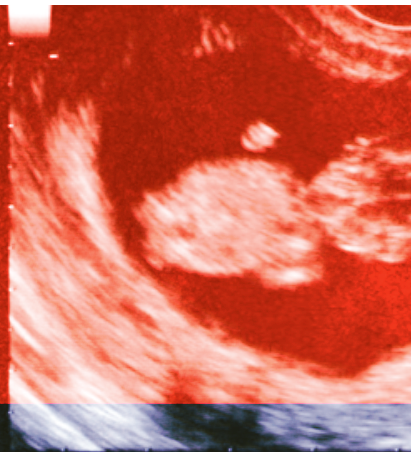
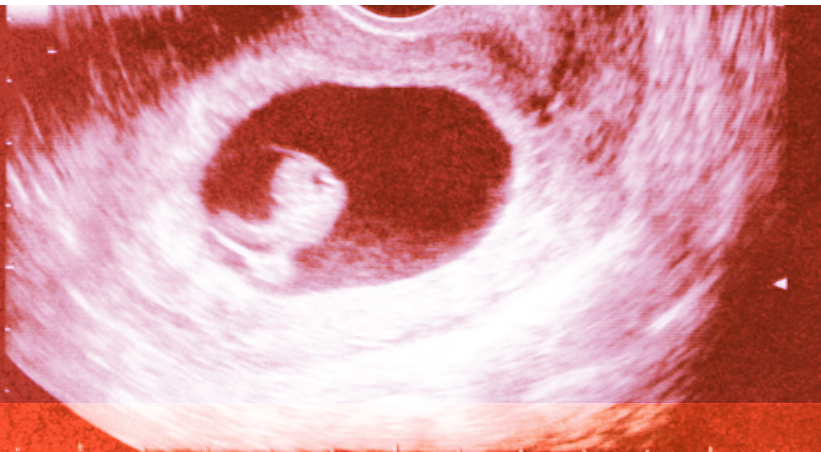
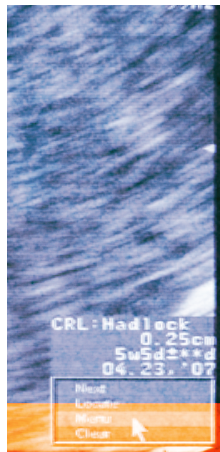
Grasping who God is, who he created us to be, and the assault on human dignity as an assault on his image and authority as creator allows us to join in the dignity revolution. We can affirm his creation, design, and glory, and can point to him in how we proclaim and display the truth.

Perhaps you value human life and know it begins at conception, but you have never dug deeper to understand why or to apply it across other issues. Or perhaps you have a theology of the *imago Dei* and human dignity but are considering how to better engage others around you and point to Christ. Either way, this book is for you. ★

Jenn Kintner is the office coordinator for the ERLC.



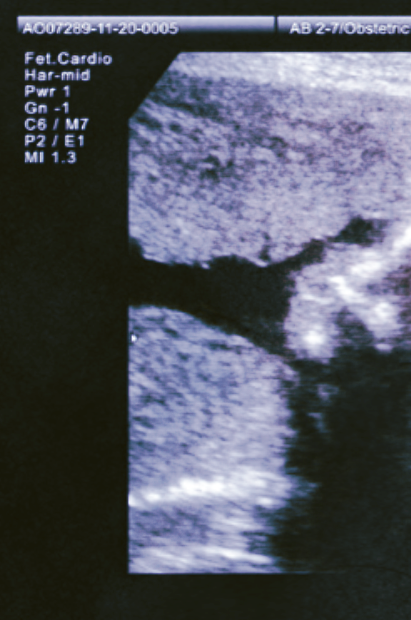
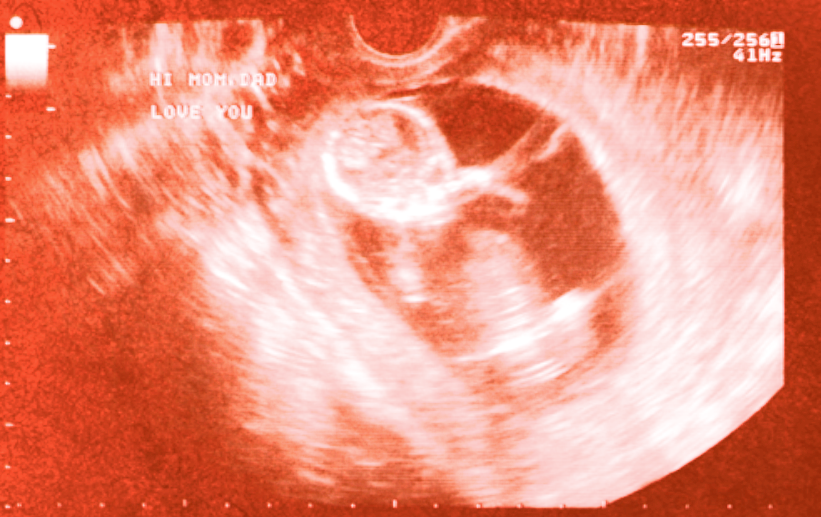
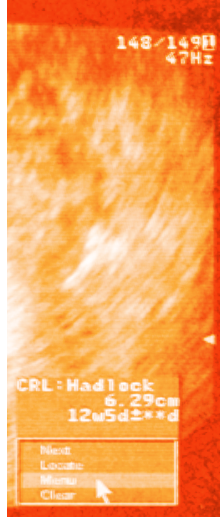
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INTACT.”



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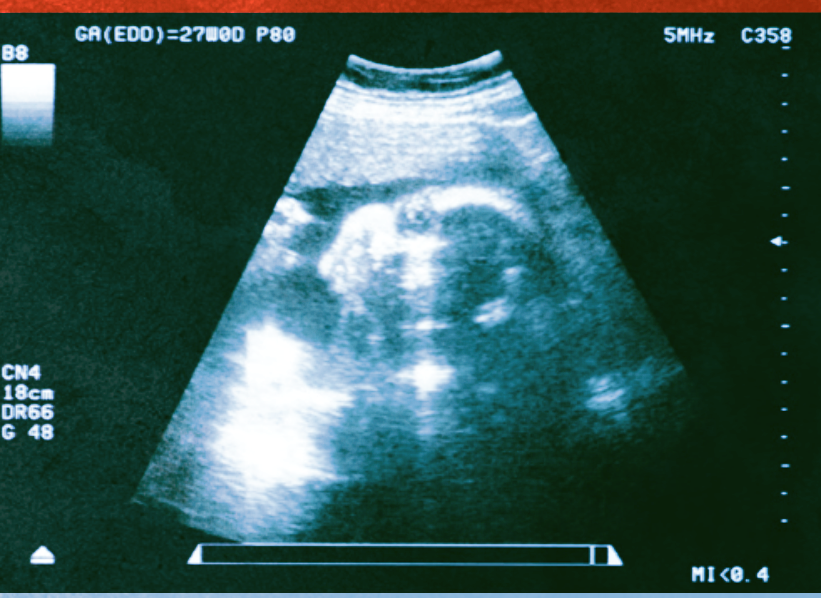
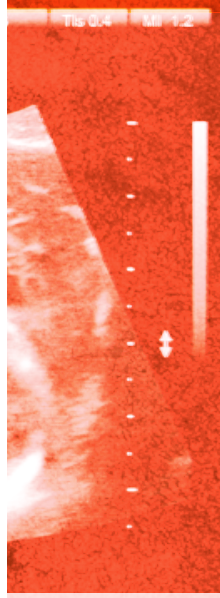
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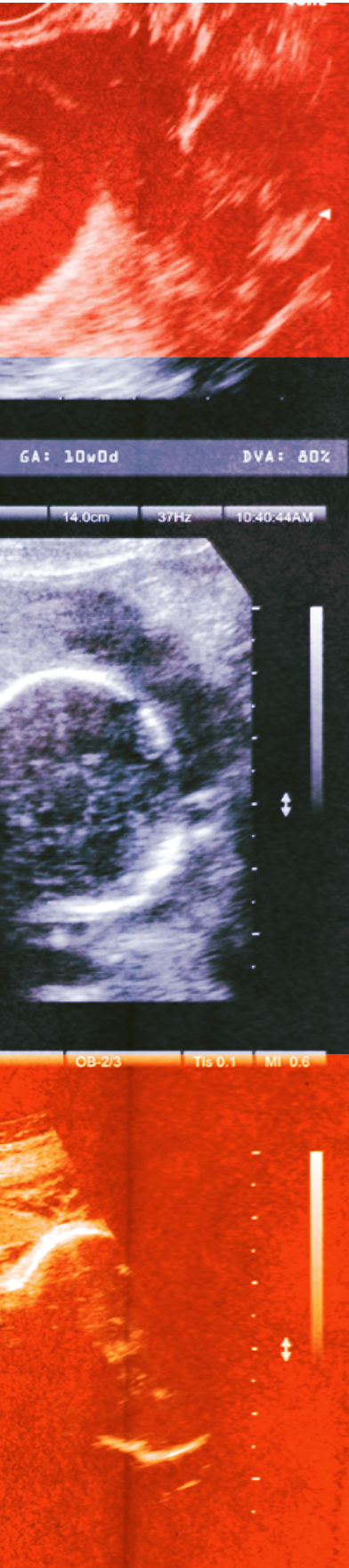
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The Problem With Personhood Debates

A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR EVERY HUMAN BEING'S RIGHT TO LIFE

C. Ben Mitchell

When *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* were handed down by the United States Supreme Court in 1973, the question everyone was asking was, “When does human life begin?” Every honest person already knew the answer to that question, and every honest person knows the answer today. Human life begins at conception. When a living human sperm unites with a living human egg, fertilization takes place, and the new organism, the human embryo, begins to develop.

Since that is clearly the case, why doesn't that fact lead everyone to the conclusion that elective abortion is the killing of a living member of the human species and is, therefore, morally wrong? That's a very important question, and we will explore the answer here.

TODAY'S QUESTION: WHO IS A PERSON?

The question being asked today is not when does human life begin, but, “Who is a person, and what do we owe persons?” Most people believe that we have a moral obligation not to unnecessarily harm another person. So the question, “Who counts as a person?” is crucial to

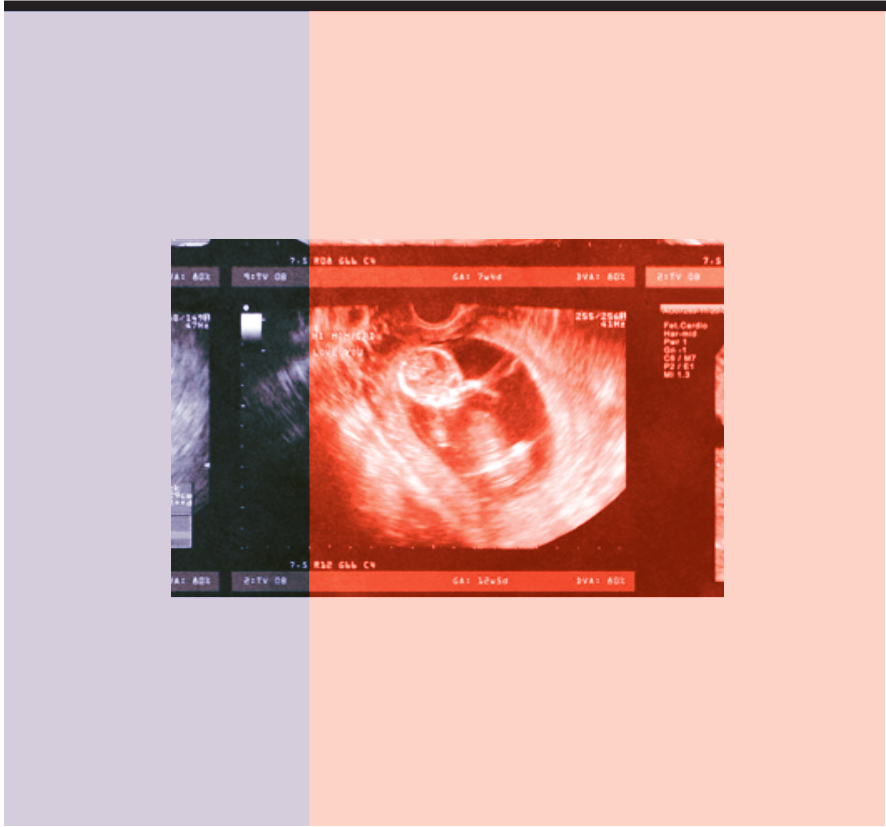
understanding our ethical responsibility toward other persons.

The Legacy of Peter Singer

Arguably, the thinker who has done more to advance the notion of personhood in the 21st century than anyone

THE NEW HUMANITY, LIKE THE OLD HUMANITY, WERE TO BE **GOOD STEWARDS** OF ALL THAT THE LORD HAD MADE.

else is Peter Singer. Australian by birth, Singer has occupied the Ira W. DeCamp chair of bioethics at Princeton University since 1999. In his 1975 volume,



Animal Liberation, and in numerous other writings, Singer has advanced the notion that what grounds our moral obligation not to harm others is their personhood. To make things more interesting, Singer believes that not all persons are human beings, and not all human beings are persons.

What makes a living thing a person? According to Singer, only beings who are self-aware or self-conscious are persons. In particular, persons are self-conscious, sentient beings. That is, they are living creatures who can experience pleasure or pain (sentient) and who can consciously reflect, however primitively, on that experience of pleasure or pain (self-aware). They are the sorts of creatures who when pricked with a needle say to themselves something like, “Ouch, that hurts! I wish that pain would stop!” They do not just react negatively to noxious stimuli (an oyster or a roach does that);

they self-consciously resist and at some level lament the harm.

For Singer, self-aware, sentient creatures should not be subjected to suffering. He believes that great apes and dolphins are self-aware, sentient beings, so they have a “right to life”—that is, a right not to be unnecessarily harmed; so do members of the bovine (cow) and porcine (pig) species. But what about fish and fowl? Are they self-aware, sentient beings? Singer isn’t sure. It’s difficult to know what it’s like to be a chicken or a flounder. So, just to be safe, Singer and his wife, Renata, are long-time vegetarians who stopped eating meat in 1971.¹

Singer is not alone, either in his vegetarianism or in extending the right to life to animals. In 2008, the Spanish parliament announced it supported granting legal rights to gorillas, chimpanzees, and orangutans.² Thomas White, a philosopher at Loyola Marymount University in

Redondo Beach, California, has argued that dolphins are “non-human persons” who have a “right to life.”³ In 2010 in Helsinki, Finland, the Collegium for Advanced Studies issued the Declaration of the Rights of Cetaceans to affirm the right to life, liberty, and well-being to whales and dolphins.⁴ The extension of the right to life to animals may eventually have implications for the right to life of non-animal “persons” like robots and other artificial intelligence (AI).

Implications for Humans

In the meantime, defining personhood as sentient self-awareness not only has implications for animals, but also for humans. On Singer’s view, human embryos and fetuses are not sentient and self-aware. Even though they are human, they are not persons. There is no harm in killing nonsentient, nonself-aware members of the species *Homo sapiens*. In fact, species membership has nothing to do with personhood for Singer. In fact, species membership has nothing to do with personhood for Singer. Privileging species membership is “speciesism,” or viewing humans as more morally important than animals, by Singer’s way of thinking. Like other forms of irrational prejudice—racism, sexism, and other “isms”—speciesism is unethical and immoral. Just because a living being is human does not mean it is wrong to harm him or her, says Singer.

In his book *Practical Ethics*, Singer claims, “Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons . . . the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee.”⁵ In 2000, he clarified his view, affirming that normal newborns are sentient, but not self-aware.⁶ In 2015, disability activists launched an effort to get Singer removed from his

academic post because of his public support for euthanizing disabled infants.⁷

THE *IMAGO DEI* AND THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN BEINGS

Personhood—at least as philosophically defined—can be problematic. Worse, it can lead to horrific abuse. So it is important to understand the basis for human exceptionalism, the view that we owe human beings special respect.

A Theological Foundation

Theologically speaking, personhood has a rich and robust legacy. There are non-human persons, including God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are also angelic non-human persons. But what distinguishes human beings from other living creatures is not personhood *per se*, but the image of God (*imago Dei*).

In one of the clearest biblical texts on the subject, God himself declares human life to

ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority” (Gen. 9:1-2 HCSB). The new humanity, like the old humanity, were to be good stewards of all that the Lord had made.

There was, however, something new. God declares, “Every living creature will be food for you; as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything. However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it. I will require the life of every animal and every man for your life and your blood. I will require the life of each man’s brother for a man’s life” (vv. 3-5). Noah and his family are given permission to kill the animals for food. It should be noted that this is not permission to be cruel or to kill the animals indiscriminately. Stewardship, not exploitation, remains the overarching paradigm.

Nevertheless, a very pointed distinction was made between killing an animal and killing a human being. Dire consequences

an affront to God himself, who made man in his image. The distinction is not personhood, at least as understood by Peter Singer. The distinction is the *imago Dei*.

God has made every human being in his image and after his likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). We have an obligation before God not to unnecessarily harm another human being. In addition, we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31). Unborn human beings are image bearers of God. Disabled human beings are imagers of God. The frail elderly are image bearers of God. They are human beings deserving of respect, care, and protection because God himself has made them in his image.

Personhood debates depend on who is defining the terms. If “persons” are “sentient self-aware creatures and only sentient self-aware creatures” then Peter Singer may be right. But if respect for human life doesn’t depend on arbitrary definitions of personhood but on the revelation of Scripture about the nature of human life made in God’s image, then every human being has a right to life grounded in the sanctity of human life which has been declared sacred by the Creator himself. ★

C. Ben Mitchell, Ph.D., is a research fellow of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and recently retired as Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy at Union University.

THE QUESTION, “WHO COUNTS AS A PERSON?” IS CRUCIAL TO UNDERSTANDING OUR ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD OTHER PERSONS.

be distinct from other forms of life. After the catastrophic flood recorded in Genesis 6-8, God renewed his covenant with Noah and Noah’s children. Just as with his covenant with Adam and Eve in Genesis 2, God blessed Noah’s progeny, calling them to, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the

will result from the killing of another human being. This is underscored in Genesis 9:6a, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, his blood will be shed by man.” But why? What’s the difference between killing animals and killing human beings? How are they different? Genesis 9:6b offers the distinction: “for God made man in His image.” To kill an innocent human being, a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, is

1 <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2006/05/chew-right-thing/>

2 <https://www.discovermagazine.com/planet-earth/great-apes-have-the-right-to-life-and-liberty-spain-says>

3 <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2010/02/dolphin-person> and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-17116882>

4 <https://www.cetaceanrights.org/>

5 Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, (Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 122–123.

6 <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/03/12/nyregion/1-peter-singer-clarifies-his-attitudes-on-sentience-210803.htm>

7 <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jun/16/peter-singer-princeton-bioethics-professor-faces-c/>



Becoming People Who Are Pro-Life and Pro-Justice

REFLECTING OUR SAVIOR BY CARING FOR ALL OF THE VULNERABLE IN OUR MIDST

Benjamin Watson

Benjamin Watson lent his voice, along with many others, at our Evangelicals for Life Conference in Washington, D.C. We hope this adapted message will encourage you to expand your understanding of what it means to be pro-life and care for the vulnerable.

* * *

“Thus says the Lord, let not a wise man boast of his wisdom and let not the mighty man boast of his might. Let not a rich man boast of his riches, but

let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving-kindness, justice, and righteousness on Earth. For I delight in these things, declares the Lord” (Jer. 9:23-24).

Several years ago, I was playing for the New Orleans Saints. I became a free agent, and a phone call came from the Baltimore Ravens. We took our family of five kids at the time and moved to Baltimore. I remember getting to Baltimore, not knowing anybody or what to expect. This was a new place, a new area, a new coaching staff, and new teammates.

I also remember reading Jeremiah 9:23-24. My wife and I have always been people who tried to leave a place better than when we got there. We say, “Lord, you placed us in certain places on purpose. Nothing happens by accident. We spent time in Boston. We know we’re here on purpose. How can we leave this place better? What’s your reason for us being here?”

It’s a question we all must ask ourselves. Why are we here? What’s the reason God put you in the various cities that you’re from? What’s the reason God put you on the West Coast when you’re an East Coast kind of girl? What’s the reason God put you down South when you know you’re a guy from Canada, and you didn’t even want to come to the United States? What’s the reason God has you in Washington, D.C., of all places? What’s the reason God had us in Baltimore?

Jeremiah says God delights in three things: Lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness. So I prayed, “Lord, wherever we are, we want to delight in what you delight in, we want to be people who bring justice, who bring kindness, who live rightly. We want people to know about you because of the things that we do and the way that we live our lives.”

PRO-LIFE IS ABOUT MORE THAN POLITICS

As I looked at this pro-life arena, I started to realize that if we’re not careful, we will go into a tribal mentality; pro-life will become more of a political stance than truly being about standing beside and for life from the womb all the way until we leave this earth. I want to stand for life in that way. This is more than politics.

If this becomes about politics, then we lose the power of the gospel, and it becomes more about us winning than about women, men, and families being cared for and being an earthly picture of the way that Christ loves his Church. If it becomes about politics, then why do we need God in it in the first place? It becomes all about pointing the finger, saying, “Hey, we beat you in this race.

Our candidate won.” But God wants more for us than that.

There’s a reason why we are pro-life. And it’s not just to win; it’s because our hope is that [the unborn baby’s] life, and those lives affected by that life, come to

THIS IDEA OF JUSTICE EMANATES FROM GOD’S CHARACTER.

know a Savior who can give them spiritual life. That’s what we’re about. That’s what I want it to be about.

PRO-LIFE AND PRO-JUSTICE

Recently, justice issues have come up. There have been videos that we’ve seen of altercations between police and citizens where young black men have been killed by police officers. We’ve seen police officers killed. There have been riots and protests. And the idea of social justice has come up a lot. And as believers, it’s really important that we engage the culture from this standpoint. Being pro-life does not mean you’re *not* pro-justice. We can be both.

This idea of justice emanates from God’s character. Jeremiah 9 talks about God being a God of justice. And as believers, we want to be like who God is. We want to identify and love the things that he loves. At the beginning of verse 23, he says not to let the wise man boast about his wisdom. One of the things we’re lacking, from my perspective, in this life and justice fight, is humility. Pride comes before a fall. It is the wedge that drives between people. Pride prevents you from admitting your own faults and guilt and from seeing where you’re wrong. And it prevents us as a community from giving the life of Christ to people who so desperately need it.

We can't turn a blind eye when people are suffering and we have resources to help people. So while being pro-life is about the womb, supporting the unborn, and protecting the vulnerable, my challenge to you is to see vulnerability in many different forms. There's more than one color of it. It comes in many shades. And as a community, we are able to address all those. Domestically, 1 in 3 women will experience physical harm from a partner, an intimate partner. There are churches that profess to be pro-life but won't address this topic. And those who are abused are led to ask, "Why doesn't my life matter?" As a community, we can change that.

My wife and I have had a chance to go overseas and support an organization called International Justice Mission. They support victims of sex trafficking and slavery. There are 40 million slaves in the world today. They're right here in the United States as well. We were able to see a field office in the country of the Dominican Republic, where there are children in the sexual exploitation industry. These children range from little babies to teenagers, young girls, and even young men. They're forced to do horrific things for money, simply because they have nothing else. This is a justice issue that we as a pro-life community must address.

Isaiah says, "Learn to do good. Seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's case" (Isa. 1:17). Over and over in Scripture, we see where God challenges the people of Israel to be people who protect widows, foreigners, the young, and the vulnerable because they had no power in those societies. And it's the same way today.

We can't stop and only think about one issue. That is not being true to the gospel. The gospel, in its totality, challenges each one of us to, in humility, ask God to show us places where we can make a difference. Ask him. He'll tell you. Open yourself up to different opportunities. And not just for the cause's sake. We get involved in

these causes of justice because we have an eternal perspective.

AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

The work my wife and I do with justice and pro-life issues is not simply for us to be nice to people. The reason is because we understand that there's an endgame. Like football, we go through the tough times, the two-a-days, wanting to quit because it's too tough, the pain and the injuries, the ups and the downs, and the emotional times because there's an endgame there. We want to have a chance to win the championship. We know that if we put in the work, we may have a chance to hold the trophy. Similarly, Christians have an eternal perspective.

My challenge to all of us is to have an eternal perspective when it comes to being pro-life and pro-justice. We're not simply doing these things because we want to check a box behind a certain candidate, or because of our parents, or because of our youth group or a group in our church. We're doing it because we want to win souls for Christ. We hope many will see this love of Christ and turn themselves to him and say, "What must I do to be saved?" That's why we do it.



MY CHALLENGE TO YOU IS TO SEE VULNERABILITY IN MANY DIFFERENT FORMS.

When we sit down with a young mother who is in crisis because her boyfriend has turned his back on her, her family is pressuring her, and she has nowhere else to turn, we stand in the gap for her, hold her hand, and say, “We want to walk you through this.” We do this for the baby, yes. We do this for her, yes. But we do this because we want to see her say, “What must I do to be saved?”

And what we found every time we’ve done anything in our communities is that the way you get to people’s hearts, usually, is by first meeting their real needs—for clothing, shelter, warmth and understanding, a companion, and to know that they are loved and worth it. Many people feel that nobody cares. By meeting that need, you show people the love of God. In turn, our hope is that at one point we’ll not only see them now, but see them in eternity.

JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Micah 6:8 says, “He has told you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” This idea of justice occurs 200 times in the Old Testament, and what it usually points to is treating people equitably, repairing broken relationships to people and to structures. So the idea of justice is individual.

But justice is also about structures. It’s about correcting structural issues and injustices and standing for those things that are bigger than the individual. God is a God of justice. Because of the fall, he has to be a God of justice. Sin entered the world, and we have inequities. We have people

that take advantage of other people. We have hatred and racism. We have things that need to be corrected individually as well as systemically.

Righteousness and justice occur together a lot. For example, in Jeremiah 9:24, kindness, justice, and righteousness occur together. And

the reason for that is because righteousness is right living. So, you have the idea of justice, which is correcting structures and relationships that are wrong. And you have the idea of righteousness, which talks about our relationship with each other, as well as our relationship with God.

Because of justice, we need to live rightly. We need to have righteousness to enact that justice. In a time of righteousness, we don’t need justice, right? Because we are doing things the way that they should be done. Therefore, you have to have both. We need to be people who stand for justice and righteousness. We need to look for ways that as a pro-life community we can expand our repertoire. Don’t allow the world to confine us to what they want us to be.

CONCLUSION

My challenge to you—and myself—is to be people who humbly come before God and say, “God, what would you have me be a champion for?” For some of us, it’s the unborn. For others, it’s sex trafficking victims. For others, it’s racial injustice. And for some of us, it’s all of the above in various ways. Ask God where he would have you pour into. Pray, “Lord, you’re a God of lovingkindness, of justice, and of righteousness. I want to be about those things. Please help me as I discover where I can best use my talent, my time, and my treasure to honor you in all of these areas.” ★

View this and other event messages at <https://erlc.com/resource-library/event-messages>

Benjamin Watson is a husband, father, and former NFL player.

STANDING DINING

for

LIFE

INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, AND ORGANIZATIONS CONTENDING FOR THE DIGNITY OF ALL PEOPLE

Close to 62 million babies are missing from our society today.¹ The *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 set into motion a literal death sentence for these little girls and boys. We should mourn that tragic reality. But we must not stop there. And we haven't.

As God does, he raised up a movement of Christians from all denominations and traditions, as well as other people committed to life, in order to become a voice in the public square for those robbed of their voice. We wanted to feature some of the brave individuals, families, and organizations who are boldly standing for the lives of our smallest neighbors.

We hope you will be inspired by their testimonies and tireless efforts. We need the church to rise up and continue to serve those affected by unplanned pregnancies, bringing the hope of the gospel and the service that flows from the example of our Savior. And as we do, we are prayerful that lives will be saved, families will be helped, and *Roe* will be overturned. May our legacy from this point forward be one of turning away from a culture of death and hastening toward a vibrant culture of life—from the moment of conception until an individual's natural last breath.

If you are interested in sharing your story or reading more testimonies about choosing life, visit www.standforlife.org.

¹ <https://www.texasrighttolife.com/more-than-61-million-babies-killed-in-47-years-of-legal-abortion/>

STANDING *for* LIFE



Megan Lively and her family.

Megan Lively

THE CHURCH'S HELP THROUGH AN UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

Megan Lively

Elizabeth was a single woman faced with an unplanned pregnancy. Elizabeth still remembers the window of the pregnancy test stick and the longest two minutes of her life. She used the foolproof test with real words. After praying on her knees, there it was. PREGNANT. She called a friend—not from her church. She couldn't handle the judgmental stares from her church, or so she thought. She assumed her friend would be supportive. Her friend brought up other “options.” However Elizabeth was confident and resolute this was not a decision to be made. She was carrying a life inside her. She told no one and visited her local OB-GYN the next day, alone.

Her doctor confirmed what she already knew. As she walked out of the cold room, a nurse handed her pamphlets that she trashed on the way out. The least pro-choice action any woman can make is to automatically assume an unmarried woman wants to have an abortion. And the worst pro-life response a mother can make, after learning of her daughter's unplanned pregnancy, is weep and say, “What will people think of our family?” Which is something Elizabeth will never forget.

Months later, while at work, a customer saw the slight bulge in her abdomen and quietly asked her about it. She smiled and told him she was having a boy. After complimenting her smile and glow, he told her nobody would ever marry her and she should consider other options.

In her third trimester, her church rallied around her. Moms offered advice.

Her pastor encouraged her. And the baby shower given by her church family was standing room only, with 200+ present. Elizabeth was given everything she registered for and diapers that lasted two years.

That church support didn't stop after the birth of Elizabeth's son. They provided baby clothes for years. They also brought a huge box of food twice a month—fresh produce, groceries, and protein-filled lean meat that filled up her freezer—for the same amount of time. Godly women stopped by often so that Elizabeth could

IT WAS THE CARE FROM HER
CHURCH AND THOSE AROUND HER
THAT SUSTAINED HER.

take a shower or a nap. It was the care from her church and those around her that sustained her.

I know because Elizabeth is me. I was Megan Elizabeth Nichols. Most now know me as Megan Lively. This is Joseph Reed Nichols, my gift from God. My firstborn. ★

Megan Lively is a wife, mom, and social media and marketing expert.

STANDING *for* LIFE



LEFT: Tiffany Elkins and her family. MIDDLE: Molly Kate Elkins. RIGHT: Molly Kate with her brothers.

Tiffany and Molly Kate Elkins

UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS AFTER A HARD DIAGNOSIS

Tiffany Elkins

I can still remember the tears rolling down my cheeks after hearing the ultrasound tech say, “It’s a girl!” My husband Barry and I had two boys, ages 9 and 11, and now we were having a baby girl. We couldn’t have been more thrilled.

Molly Kate was such a sweet, laid-back baby, but as she grew, we noticed that she didn’t do things quite as quickly as her brothers had done. As the months went by, she began missing more and more milestones, and we began to realize that something else was going on. When MK was about 12 months old, an MRI and genetic blood work were ordered. The MRI revealed that MK had cerebellar hypoplasia, a condition affecting the

development of the cerebellum in her brain, which helps with balance, equilibrium, muscle tone, movement, speech, and learning. Our world was turned upside down.

Looking back, that was a really tough day and a really tough year. We went from thinking that we were dealing with something temporary to knowing that it would be lifelong for her. As we began to research her condition, we saw that the effects of cerebellar hypoplasia varied widely in children. Some could walk with minimal impairment, while others used wheelchairs. Some just had speech delays, while others remained nonverbal. Cognitive levels varied all over the place.

We had no idea what was in her future, but as one of her specialists said, “Molly Kate is the captain of this ship and she will show us what she can and will do as we go.” We agreed that God, as the true captain of her ship, would write her story, regardless of what the research might say. The doctor refused to put limits on her, and so did we.

As time went on, MK progressed with her therapies but continued to be severely delayed. We would celebrate every “inch-stone,” as we would call them, and it was so exciting to watch her accomplish even the tiniest things. We were watching, in slow motion, as she learned to do the things that most of us take for granted.



We were learning more and more that the promises in Scripture that we had heard and read all of our lives were so very true as God upheld us each step of the way.

When we first realized that MK would probably need a wheelchair, we were devastated. But by the time she was 2 ½, we were thrilled to see her with a way to get around. People couldn't help but smile when they saw this sweet and happy little girl on wheels.

As she continued to grow, she remained nonverbal. I would sit in her room at night, with tears streaming down my face, praying that one day I would hear the word "Mama." We were realizing, though, that this little girl who couldn't speak a word was teaching us more than we ever dreamed we would learn.

At age 4, she finally said that beautiful word, "Mama." Now, at age 8, with the help of a communication device, she can say hundreds of words and uses her device to memorize and quote Scripture.

GOD'S GLORY IS PUT ON DISPLAY THROUGH WHAT HE HAS DONE AND CONTINUES TO DO IN AND THROUGH HER.

Still, even if she never made progress in any of her physical skills, we would love her just as much. We know that she is made in the image of God and her worth is determined by the fact that he created and loves her more than we can fathom.

Today, MK requires a lot of assistance with her daily activities, but instead of seeing it as a burden or a chore, God has

opened our eyes to what a privilege it is to walk with her through each stage of life. Although the road is not always easy, the blessings of being MK's parents far outweigh that. The joy she has brought to our family and to every person she meets is indescribable. God's glory is put on display through what he has done and continues to do in and through her. The beautiful community of families in the disability community is something that we may have never known without her. We have learned a new level of compassion and empathy for others and of leaning into God's promises.

This is not the way we imagined her life to look, but we stand amazed as God continues to reveal his plan. We know his story for her is so far from over, so we continue to hold onto his promises and watch his glorious unfolding. To him be the glory! ★

Tiffany Elkins is a wife and mom.



Laura and Lifeline Children's Services

THE LIFE-GIVING CHOICE OF ADOPTION

Christie Mac Segars

When Laura* first found out she was pregnant, she was devastated. She describes it as “the worst time of my life” or “a nightmare.” She found out she was pregnant at almost 11 weeks during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and also lost her job in the same week. She knew she could not care for a child and did not want to face her family and tell them of the pregnancy. So, she started down the only path she knew.

She scrambled for phone numbers to abortion clinics. She found a clinic in another state that could perform an abortion up to 22 weeks. She said, “Nothing about going that route or considering that option felt right.” Yet, she knew parenting was not an option. Before she left with the abortion pill, she demanded to see the sonogram. When Laura learned she was carrying twins, she burst into tears because she is a twin herself. She got out of that clinic as quickly as she could.

Still feeling as if abortion was not right, but also knowing she could not care for two sweet babies, she left uncertain of what she would do next. Thankfully, her family did find out about her pregnancy, and they gave her the encouragement she needed to consider adoption. After a family member told Laura about Lifeline Children’s Services, she was partnered with Jenna, a pregnancy counselor who lived close by. Jenna offered to meet with Laura as often as she needed to think through parenting and adoption, and make what she felt was the best decision for herself and her babies.

It was during this first meeting that Jenna shared the gospel with Laura, as well. They talked about the weight of shame Laura was feeling and how all the paths she had followed in search of wholeness had left her in this broken place. Instead, Jesus was offering her forgiveness and wholeness right now, and Laura accepted that forgiveness. This changed her entire perspective on her pregnancy and hope for her future!

She was able to hold on to the peace of God as she weighed her many factors. With God’s peace and Jenna’s support, Laura made the decision that adoption was the best life for her children. Then Jenna and Laura began talking about what Laura desired in an adoptive family, and she was connected to one that fit those desires. As the months went by and her due date approached, Laura worked with her pregnancy counselor to think about her hospital time, as well.

For Laura, this is when she felt “all the questions started coming.” *Would I be alone during hospital time, because of COVID? Will the adoptive parents be at the hospital? How would I feel afterward? Will I still have support after placing? Should I parent or is adoption really best?* “Jenna reassured me that this was my plan and that it was OK to feel whatever I was feeling. We made my ideal plan and played the rest of it by ear (due to COVID). I would not be alone.”

And she wasn’t. Not only did she have the support of her pregnancy counselor, but she also had the support of Lifeline staff and her twins’ new adoptive parents. After being connected with Lifeline, these adoptive parents, Tanya and Barrett, received a thorough home study and extensive education on adoption, prenatal trauma, open adoption, birthparent relationships, and more. While adoption used to be a secret process that was not discussed, now all adoptions through Lifeline are open for communication, unless the birthparents do not request it.

Laura said her situation “has now ended in a beautiful story and blessing for so many people involved. Not only do the parents finally have what they have always wanted—children—[but] I get to see them grow and be involved with the

open adoption plan we have created with the help of Lifeline. I have gained two friends in Tanya and Barrett.”

Adoption, like parenting or abortion, is not without grief and loss. Yet, the support provided through Lifeline’s continued post-placement support for birth families and post-adoption support for adoptive families, as well as support by

LAURA SAID HER SITUATION “HAS NOW ENDED IN A BEAUTIFUL STORY AND BLESSING FOR SO MANY PEOPLE INVOLVED.”

the local church, helps all members of the adoption triad to heal and thrive.

“As far as myself personally,” shared Laura, “the girls have taught me so much about myself and where I want to stand in my life. The smallest decisions can impact so much whether they are good or bad, and sometimes the bad decisions can teach you more than the good. I can now see the bigger picture meant for myself and those sweet girls. I see a bright future ahead for [them], their mom, dad, and their entire family. I can’t wait to witness it . . . I plan to find a church, and I know that through prayer and his Word I have peace. I chose life for them, and I want to say thank you to those precious girls for also giving me life.” ★

Christie Mac Segars is the vice president of Domestic Programs at Lifeline.

*Name changed for privacy.

STANDING *for* LIFE



Abby, Pearl, and Brennan Brown.

The Pearl Brown Story

WALKING THROUGH LIFE, LOVE, AND LAMENT

Eric and Ruth Brown

Eric Brown: My name is Eric Brown. I am a photographer, and I am married to my wife, Ruth. We have three kids: Brennan, Abby, and we had a daughter named Pearl who passed away in 2018.

Ruth Brown: When it was time for the ultrasound at 20 weeks, we basically thought we were going to show up to figure out if we were having a little boy or a little girl. The technician started giving us weird vibes, but we still just thought that she couldn't get a good angle. The baby wasn't moving the way that she wanted to get all of the pictures. So, at first, she sent us on to the midwife and told us we'd probably need more pictures later on. But of course, the techs aren't allowed to tell you anything.

The first inkling that we got that something was actually wrong was when the midwife came into the room to talk to us after

the ultrasound. She barely got in the door and just started weeping. She was like, "Things aren't what we hoped they would be. Your baby girl is not developing well. And this is out of my realm. I need to send you to a specialist. He'll give you more information." She had to Google the name of the condition before she came in to talk to us; it's not super common. It was the first that she had dealt with this specific condition. So she sent us on to a maternal-fetal medicine doctor, and he was anything but hopeful.

EB: She had a condition called Alobar holoprosencephaly, which, he said, was not compatible with life.

RB: Basically, it means that her brain wasn't forming properly. There was a lot more fluid and less brain matter inside her head.

EB: He advised us to head across the hallway and terminate the pregnancy and go home and be thankful we had two other kids.

RB: And while we were very much happy with Brennan and Abby, Pearl was also our kid, and our job was to protect her. And so that's what we did.

EB: It seemed like he was just presenting us with, "This is the obvious thing that you do. There's really not anything other than to head across the hallway and terminate."

RB: We said that we couldn't do that. We had just seen our baby girl moving on the ultrasound. She waved. I could not force her out of my body at that point and give up. I couldn't do it. To us, the only option was to support our daughter as long as we could.

I remember having a conversation about naming her [while] sitting in the car with Eric. The name Pearl conjures so many different images of beauty coming out of something that's not originally beautiful. And her middle name is Joy, and that was a prayer.

EB: I think about the Bible story of the pearl of great value. It's a simple name. I liked that, and I thought it reflects who she was.

RB: Once we found out that Pearl's time with us would likely be limited, and might be limited to only living inside my belly, then we started acknowledging her presence a little bit more than we had with Brendan and Abby during their pregnancies.

EB: We wanted to count everything and make sure that everything mattered and that her siblings wouldn't make the mistake of thinking that Pearl was the sister that they almost had. She definitely was the sister that they already had.

RB: We ended up needing to induce labor about three weeks early. The plan was to have as calm and natural of a delivery as possible so that we could enjoy whatever time that we had with Pearl. Walking into the hospital, knowing that she was about to be born and not knowing what was going to come next, not knowing if Brennan and Abby were going to have a chance to meet her, not knowing if the photographer would get there in time to capture pictures of her with us, was a scary day.

EB: Pearl came out fighting. And we decided we would join her in the fight. The whole idea was to always follow Pearl's lead, and she came out fighting. So we joined her in that fight.

RB: Once she was born, we were able to see that she had a cleft as well. She was a little bit smaller than the other kids her age, but the main thing was that her brain wasn't functioning the way that most people's brains do. And that affected the way that she would move her body. That affected the way that she breathed. It affected everything about her life.

When she was in what would typically be like the toddler years, she would kind of babble and wave her arms at us. It was sweet. She had bright red hair, and so one Halloween I dressed her up as Pippi Longstocking with the colored leggings and those sweet little pigtails poking out of the sides. Brennan and Abby would make a little pallet on the floor, and they would read books and sing to her. Abby would help with Pearl's therapy exercises.

Many days, it was the five of us hanging out inside of our house, just being together. [They weren't] the normal things that other families did, but we loved it. We loved spending time together.

EB: The morning that Pearl passed, we didn't sit in her room and sing hymns to her. We weren't quoting Scripture. I don't know about [everyone else], but I wasn't praying. It seemed like the

four of us laid in her bed, completely lost and shell-shocked, for hours and hours and hours, because the process of turning off a ventilator for such a strong kid like Pearl was really, really drawn out.

RB: It was right at the beginning of Lent. So we spent that season waiting for a new Easter and feeling lament heavier than we ever had before.

EB: I've never felt a darkness like the darkness that I felt coming in waves that morning.

RB: And she passed away right before Easter.

EB: Some days the hardest part is just her not being here. Some days the hardest part is wanting to be close to her body and to spend time physically with her.

WALKING INTO THE HOSPITAL, KNOWING THAT SHE WAS ABOUT TO BE BORN AND NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS GOING TO COME NEXT . . . WAS A SCARY DAY.

RB: I do have joy in the world, but I probably look a little bit less happy most days. And that's an OK difference.

EB: Within the community of people saying choose life for kids like Pearl, for children with special needs and poor prenatal diagnoses, I feel like we are very equipped for how to choose life and how to say yes, how to advocate for life, and how to support. But if we're going to advocate that children like her be carried to term, we've got to know that these children oftentimes are not long for this world. And, I could be wrong, but I think we need to be equally as invigorated with learning how and helping each other know how to say goodbye to these children.

We knew Pearl was never going to turn into a grandmother at some point or grow into old age. She was going to have a short life. But when the grief hit, I was not prepared. I felt my faith sliding through my fingers like sand. And it wasn't like I was trying to deconstruct or explore leaving the faith, as if I wanted nothing to do with God. I wanted him, if for no other reason [than] I could find no other way forward. My friends couldn't help me, therapists couldn't help me, pastors couldn't help me. Nobody could help me. So I knew that the only way forward was going to be Christ. And that's only because he's promised to finish whatever good work he had started in me.

And though I could see nothing at the time, I have a really long history of seeing God already having begun work in me. That was it. That was all I had. But it was dying and collapsing, and it seemed like the worst possible end to Pearl's story: *Oh yeah, and then Dad's faith just disappeared.* It felt crazy to me, and I couldn't make sense of it. I couldn't see straight. I behaved in the way that you would think anybody who couldn't see straight would behave. And then one day—I don't know why he chose to start moving when he did—God just started to turn the lights back on.

It was a split second before it was too late. He waited till then to move. And then it felt like he rushed in and started turning all the lights in the room on. *Stop, stop, stop, stop. Enough of the darkness. Enough of the sin. Enough of the unbelief. Enough of all of this. I never left. I was here the whole time, and I didn't expect anything from you. I didn't expect you to do this well. I didn't expect you to do this missionally. I didn't expect anything. All I want to do is to be your Dad.*

That's all. That's all he wanted. And I'm grateful he moved when he did.

RB: It's OK to really, really miss my daughter. And being upset or sad or emotional about that doesn't mean that I don't know that God's going to make it all OK again. It's just not going to feel OK tomorrow or next week. But I have peace in the thought that it'll be OK in a thousand years, and the time that I will have spent



TOP: Pearl Brown. BOTTOM: The Brown family at Pearl's funeral.

missing her will be just this little blip in this timeline of what God's been doing. That'll make it OK.

EB: I feel like I had a really robust theology, and I had a really big view of God. I could clearly articulate the relationship between his sovereignty and suffering. None of that was enough to carry me through that dark night of the soul. None of that. None of my big perspective on him, none of my right theologies. But I have a God who was bigger than my right theologies then, and I have a God who was bigger than my wrong perspectives during that first season of losing Pearl. He was just so much bigger than even I know now. And that gives me so much confidence. He's good. ★

View "The Pearl Brown Story" at <https://erlc.com/about/pearlbrown/>

Eric Brown is a husband, father, and photographer.

Ruth Brown is a wife and mother.

CONVERSATIONS ON
CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

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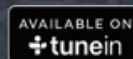
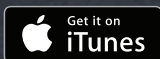
Lindsay Nicolet



Brent Leatherwood



Josh Wester

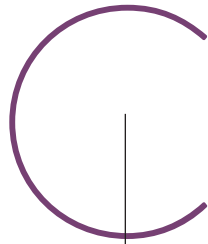


FROM WOMB TO TOMB



HOW TO *REALLY* BE WHOLE-LIFE, PRO-LIFE

Daniel Darling



Christians believe strongly in the sanctity of human life. It's woven into the Bible's narrative, from the very beginning, where we see Moses describe the origin of life in the most descriptive of ways. Most of creation is spoken into existence by the word of the Lord, but the text of Genesis then pauses to draw out the way in which God crafted human bodies and souls.

We read that the entire Godhead was involved: *Let us make man in our image*. We read language of care: God making Adam from the dust of the ground and breathing into him the breath of life. King David goes further, describing in Psalm 139 how God molds each baby in the womb, assigns them personhood, and ascribes to each a special, God-given purpose.

The Christian tradition is the only religion in the world that gives such a breathtaking view of humanity. Even cultures that are increasingly antagonistic toward Christianity unconsciously borrow their sense of justice and dignity from the Bible's vision of what it means to be human.

IMAGO DEI AND CHRISTIAN IMPERATIVES

The rich theology of the *imago Dei* then offers Christians several imperatives, both for how we see ourselves and how we see the world.

First, it reminds us that we are not our own. At its most basic level, the Christian gospel is telling human beings that they were created by a loving Father, from whom they've been alienated by their own sin and who sent Jesus to rescue them from eternal death and reunite them to himself. To be created means we are not self-created. It means the world doesn't revolve around us. It means we are not, contrary to pop spirituality, "The masters of our own fates, the captains of our own souls." We belong to someone.

Secondly, understanding the *imago Dei* changes the way we see our neighbors. There are no disposable people in God's economy. Every human being has dignity and worth. This should shape our posture in the world. It means we should think long and hard about difficult ethical issues and, as redeemed image-bearers, actively advocate for policies that respect the dignity of our fellow image-bearers. We will, of course, disagree on the best approaches toward alleviating the suffering of our neighbors and the feasibility and wisdom of policy proposals, but our disposition toward the vulnerable should be one of advocacy, care, and love.

HOW SHOULD WE ADVOCATE FOR THE VULNERABLE?

So how do we do this in a world that presents so many competing visions for human flourishing and so many opportunities to speak up for human dignity? How do we adopt an effective whole-life, pro-life posture?

Here are a few suggestions:

1. Refuse to engage in a zero-sum game.

We live in a world that wants to trade one set of vulnerable people's

lives for another. The internet is full of these ridiculous arguments, where advocacy for one group is met by advocates of another group, as if to say that one has more dignity than the other. But advocating for humanity dignity does not mean one set of people wins while another loses. We should do all we can to ensure the flourishing of all of our neighbors.

2. Resist the urge to turn "whole-life" into a weapon.

Quite often, those who, like me, advocate for a holistic human dignity perspective are tempted to wield this over and against folks who might concentrate on one particular area. This is most commonly used against those who have labored, for decades, in advocating for unborn human life.

The "if you were really pro-life" canard is used not to welcome folks into support for efforts on behalf of other vulnerable groups, but to shame people away from their support for the unborn, the most defenseless humans in society today. If the "whole-life" position is simply a way of shaming people on social media, motivations should be evaluated: Is this truly a



matter of conviction or a way to score easy digital wins?

3. Remember that you can be an ally without being a professional advocate.

There are some whose life calling requires them to speak to a range of human dignity issues, but for many, their belief in the *imago Dei* pulls them toward one

were vulnerable when Jesus visited us and restored us to spiritual health. Understanding our own vulnerability makes us humble advocates who work to build coalitions to help the vulnerable, rather than would-be social media prophets who wield human dignity as a weapon to beat up others.

Vulnerability is also a check against a “save-the-world” activism that has us looking in the mirror every day and seeing

A THEOLOGY OF HUMAN DIGNITY, THREADED THROUGHOUT THE SCRIPTURES AND EMBEDDED IN THE GOSPEL NARRATIVE OF CHRIST’S LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION, SHOULD SHAPE THE WAY WE SEE OURSELVES AND THE WORLD.

particular focus. For example, it’s good that there are Christians who have dedicated their whole lives to disease eradication or relief in developing countries. This narrow focus allows them to be good at what they do. That’s a very different—but no more or less noble—calling than someone who has devoted their whole life to legal challenges to ending abortion. I don’t expect the relief worker to testify on Capitol Hill about third-trimester viability, nor do I expect the pro-life advocate to understand the nuances of water sustainability in the sub-Saharan.

There are special gifts, callings, and abilities because God has gifted the church in multiple ways. What we can do, however, is find allies. We can support those who engage in different callings without questioning their human dignity bonafides or accusing them of partisanship.

4. Rejoice in your own vulnerability.


A whole-life, pro-life vision should also remind us of our own vulnerability. We often see ourselves as the Good Samaritan in the parable Jesus told to the religious leaders, but we should also see ourselves as the man on the side of the road. We

the next hero. Ultimately, we should recognize that our ability to advocate, to speak up, and to work with our hands is only a small part of what God is already doing in the world through Christ to redeem and restore. This is not *our* mission. We are joining his mission. We can’t usher in the kingdom by our tweets, press releases, books, and advocacy. In the end, the good we do—however much—is only a tiny pinprick of light that shows the world a glimpse of the much better world to come.

A theology of human dignity, threaded throughout the Scriptures and embedded in the gospel narrative of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, should shape the way we see ourselves and the world. It should motivate us to use our time, talents, and treasures to serve as ambassadors of God’s giving, by both sharing the good news that God offers salvation to those who confess Jesus as Lord and by demonstrating with our lives the ethics of God’s new kingdom. ★

Daniel Darling is the senior vice president for Communications at NRB.



A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, looking down at a pregnancy test she is holding in her hands. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP MOMS CHOOSE LIFE

Getting the Church Ready to Save Lives

Amy Ford

As we near the 49th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the pro-life movement is committed now more than ever to advancing the sanctity of human life and to making abortion unthinkable. For years, trail-blazing organizations and individuals have worked tirelessly to help empower women to make life-saving decisions. Many of these organizations regularly work together in order to reach even more women and make a greater impact.

As a collective of pro-life leaders all doing unique work in the movement, we share the belief that we need all of you for

the future of the movement. We need the church, because it's going to take all of us doing our part to change hearts and lives.

The church isn't a building. People *are* the church. We are the church wherever we go, and we represent Jesus wherever we are. The church can play a powerful role in saving lives. We can help prevent unplanned pregnancies by affirming people's identity and value as those made in God's image—and for those who trust in Jesus, as daughters and sons of the King—and by talking about hard topics like sex and abstinence.

The church can be one of the first places a girl runs to when she finds out she has

an unplanned pregnancy. It should never be the place she avoids because of shame and guilt. We can help her be brave and choose life. The church can reach out and invite these women and men into a spiritual family. We can help heal past hurts and wounds because free people, free people. And we can help practically by giving single moms a hand up so they don't just survive, they thrive.

GETTING THE CHURCH READY TO SAVE LIVES

Most Christians *say* they want to live that way. But I believe the same Christians who have taken a stance for the sanctity of life take one thing for granted: If abortion became illegal today, many churches would not be ready.

What would we do if there were women who were pregnant and scared, even angry, that they must carry the baby to term? It wouldn't be right for us to look away and say, "Good luck!" We would need to be available to assist spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

It's time to get the church ready. We can't ignore these women anymore.

There may be different reasons behind every woman's choice, but all of them are rooted in fear. Together, we can ease her fears and help her be brave. How can we do it? The recipe for transforming fear to faith is simple. There is one main ingredient: love. First John 4:18 explains clearly, "there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment."

We punish women with unplanned pregnancies when we label them or ignore them. But it is not guilt that brings transformation—"The goodness of God leads [us] to repentance" (Rom. 2:4 NKJV). If we're not showing and sharing the goodness and kindness of our Heavenly Father, how will anyone know the hope of Jesus? It is love that changes hearts and mindsets.

Simply put, love saves lives.

We can't just vote a certain way or talk about what needs to change—we *are*



*When your heartbreak becomes
a map to find a place to serve,
it will set your soul on fire.*

the change. And it will take all of us to create change. Miracles won't happen if we are content to pass by on the other side of the road when we see people who are hurting, bruised, and afraid. It is time to activate our beliefs by being "good Samaritans," bandaging the wounds of the broken and introducing them to the Healer of hearts.

WHERE SHOULD YOU GET INVOLVED?

Many of you may ask, "Okay, we need to love. But *how*? What does it look like

in practical terms? How do I know where to start? Where do I find a place to serve or get involved? I don't even know what's out there or what I might have to offer."

I felt the same way a few years ago. I didn't even know there was a pro-life movement before I started Embrace Grace, a nonprofit that inspires and equips the church to love on single and pregnant young women and their families. After my first book, *A Bump in Life*, released, I received invitations to speak



for various organizations. One of them was a Care Net Conference, a training conference for pregnancy center workers. When I arrived, there were hundreds of pro-life ministries lining the hotel hallways in order to share information about a service or life-saving ministry that people could connect and get involved with. I walked up and down those halls in awe of how many amazing resources were available. I kept thinking, *If only people knew about all of these!*

The pro-life movement is filled with love and opportunity. The possibilities are endless. Whether you partner with an organization that is already doing great things or start something new on your own, there is a place for you to help and serve. God has put certain strengths, gifts, talents, and passions within you so you can use them for his glory and your neighbor's good.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself as you pray about where to get involved:

1. What are you passionate about? What is your favorite hobby or thing to do in your spare time? Can it somehow connect to the pro-life movement? For example, if you love numbers and accounting, you might help a single mom create a budget. If you're familiar with human resources or love career coaching, you might help a single mom create her resume and find a good job. If you love children, you could offer to babysit. If you have a knack for fixing cars, you could help repair a single mom's car.
2. What makes you pound your fist on the table and say, "Someone needs to do something about this"? That *someone* might be you. There's a reason why you get fired up about a certain injustice or cause.
3. What is your story? A lot of times, our purpose is tied to our story. Have you experienced an abortion and want to help others experience God's healing the way you have? Did an unplanned pregnancy leave you feeling completely alone? Perhaps you can be the person you wish had been there for you. God often uses our deepest pain as the launching pad for our greatest calling.

Look out into the world and see what breaks your heart. Run *toward* your heartbreak, not away from it. Ask God if your heart is broken because his is too. When your heartbreak becomes a map to find a place to serve, it will set your soul on fire. If all of us work together, we can empower women to be brave. We would be blessing future generations, because brave moms raise brave kids.

Whatever stirs your soul and compels you to act, have an open heart, and just start. Take a step and see where the pro-love path leads. God may show you an opportunity you never knew to look for.

You can be the answer to someone's prayer. There might be a new mother out there who needs you. And while you can't fix all of her problems, you can point her to the one who can.

Recently, I was working the Embrace Grace booth at a pro-life women's conference, and a friend of mine named Terrisa, the founder and executive director of Pro-Life San Francisco, came by to chat. She leads a millennial-focused grassroots activist group operating in arguably the most pro-choice city in America. She speaks to pro-life groups about secular and millennial outreach throughout the United States.

But what really makes her stand out in the pro-life community is that she is an atheist.

"Amy," she said, "I wanted to see if you would be one of our speakers at our upcoming Pro-Life San Francisco event that will take place at Berkeley College. Would you be interested?"

I couldn't hide my surprise. "Umm, you know what my message is about, right? The church, life, love, and Jesus. Wouldn't that be an issue for you?"

"Yeah, I know what your pro-love message is about. I don't believe in your God. But I believe in the power of your people. If you can get the church to actually *do something*, then the abortion issue wouldn't even be an issue. The pro-life side has the manpower because we have the church. We have got to activate the church to get involved, and things will start to change."

Why can an atheist recognize the power within us, but we can't? Come on, church! If we join together, using all the strengths and gifts God put inside each one of us, we would push the tipping point back toward life—and back toward love. ★

Amy Ford is the co-founder and president of *Embrace Grace*.



**THE
DEHUMANIZING
IRONY
OF
THE
DIGITAL
AGE**

**Planned Parenthood, Technology,
and the Longing for Community**

Jason Thacker

In January 2019, Planned Parenthood announced the launch of a sexual health chatbot named Roo, which is designed to help answer some of the most awkward or intimate questions that teenagers may have about their body, sex, relationships, and a host of other related issues. The chatbot is built on artificial intelligence (AI) and is available 24/7. It functions like text messaging a trusted friend, but with supposed expert advice coming from a host of medical professionals and adults. The bot's sleek design and social media-like interface learns as it goes, providing more personalized answers, and does all of this in a private, isolated environment.

It should come as no surprise that Planned Parenthood is pioneering this type of technology as part of its arsenal of cutting edge products, all designed to provide medical care and abortions nationwide. The goal is to make this kind of information easy and accessible for teenagers in a convenient and efficient packet. While the system will normally answer whatever questions one might ask, it regularly counsels users to connect with Planned Parenthood staff or medical teams, especially when it comes to issues of abortion or pregnancy care.

Planned Parenthood bills this technology as a way to reach people where they are and explains, "Young people can ask Roo their burning questions about their health, their body, relationships, getting care at Planned Parenthood, or choose from a list of questions, to get the answers they need within seconds, day or night. The chatbot is designed for 13 to 17 year-olds, but can be used by anyone who has questions about sexual and reproductive health."¹

Questions range from how to navigate relationships to the acceptability

of watching pornography for both boys and girls. Other questions concern how to know if you might be attracted to the opposite sex, what it means to be transgender, what to do if you think you may be pregnant, how to get over a crush, and even what happens during puberty. While many of the questions are understandable and common for young people, the entire system is disheartening, not just because of who is behind the technology but also because of the lack of actual community with parents, guardians, or other trusted relationships.

HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN DEHUMANIZE US

To many, this online app may seem innocuous, but this is because technology has become part of everything we do. Our lives have been shaped by the ubiquity of technology, including how we work, learn, play, and even build relationships with those around us. Jacques Ellul, one of the most prescient figures and astute observers of the cultural and moral shifts taking place in the 20th century due to the rise of modern technology, opened his influential work, *The Technological Society*, by saying, "No social, human, or spiritual fact is so important as the fact of technique in the modern world. And yet no subject is so little understood."² These words, penned in the 1950s by the late French sociologist and theologian, speak directly to the modern debates over technology and its proper role in our lives. They also speak to the complexity of these systems and how they are radically shaping our society. Today, technology is often assumed and assimilated instead of being examined or questioned regarding its nature and proper role.

One of the most profound shifts in how technology is forming us is seen in the example of Planned Parenthood's Roo chatbot. It demonstrates that in the pursuit of the most efficient and effective means,



we often think technology can solve the problems that accompany its adoption. As Canadian philosopher George Grant once said, “more technology is needed to meet the emergencies which technology has produced.”³ One of the main problems that has arisen with technologies like social media and other forms of media entertainment is that they have impeded our ability to connect with others at deep and intimate levels.

For all of their good, these technologies tend to isolate us and are designed to constantly entertain us. They achieve this by keeping us distracted and unengaged with the things we see with each scroll. The Roo app is just one way society has tried to develop newer technology to counter problems like these. But, as a result of the technology’s function, we become unable to build deep and meaningful relationships with others. And in the case of teenagers, they may now resort to a sexual health chatbot, instead of parents or other reliable adults, in order to ask the things about which they are naturally curious.

Planned Parenthood’s goal is to help digital-age teens answer questions that may feel silly, awkward, or weird asking adults in the context of community,

but it does so with a very clear agenda. While I am obviously alarmed that this is coming from the nation’s largest abortion provider, I am also concerned that this illustrates we have given over the difficult aspects of raising teenagers to technology and neglected to develop the relationships necessary to let the awkward feel normal.

God created man and woman as unique individuals who are made in his image and are meant for community with himself and one another (Gen. 1:26-28). These relationships are key aspects of what it means to be authentically human. We must wake up to how technology is subtly shaping us to think of humans as machines and isolated information-processors, rather than image-bearers of the most high God who are designed for deep, trusting, and honest community with one another. The truth about who he has made us to be doesn’t change in a digital age.

THE DANGER OF HUMANIZING TECHNOLOGY

In an ironic twist, given how technology is influencing us in dehumanizing ways, we often seek to humanize our technologies, as seen with Planned Parenthood’s Roo.

And, tragically, in a time when the baby in the womb is called a fetus or simply a clump of tissue, we name our machines and give them personalities. For example, Roo not only has a cute name but also an icon that winks at users and engages unsuspecting teenagers as if there is someone trustworthy on the other side of the chat bubble. Given the brokenness all around us today—in our families, communities, churches, and more—it is understandable and lamentable that technology is seen as a substitute for authentic community.

The leaders of Planned Parenthood grasp the times in which they live and know Roo is an effective way to reach young people. As a result, they are able to persuasively spread their message of abortion as healthcare to those most at risk for unplanned pregnancies or health-related issues. While Roo might

the world's influence. One of the ways that our churches can serve our communities better is by building relationships with those around us and seeking to develop trust that will last beyond the perceived usefulness of these types of technologies.

The church must prioritize the embodied souls that God has placed in our path over forms of technological advance, all the while advocating for God-honoring uses of technology. This does not mean that we seek to abandon all forms of technology in our communities and life, as if that would even be feasible or possible. It simply means being aware of how these technologies can dehumanize and separate us and our neighbors

God calls his church to wisdom as we engage the shifting technological culture around us. Technology is deeply embedded into every aspect of our lives, whether we like it or not, and has great potential to affirm the humanity of our neighbors—even the smallest among us. We can harness the power of technology to reveal the life of a baby in the womb and stay connected with real relationships while also rejecting the constant push to humanize our technologies.

As Christians, God calls us to love those around us as he loves us, choosing to personally step into difficult and sometimes awkward situations in order to proclaim a better way—a way that trades asking a sleek chatbot personal and intimate questions for the connectedness of trusted flesh-and-blood relationships with fellow image-bearers. ★

Jason Thacker is the chair of research in technology at the ERLC.

1 <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/planned-parenthood-launches-new-sexual-health-chatbot-to-meet-the-needs-of-young-people-24-7>

2 Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 3.

3 Grant, George. *Technology & Justice*. Toronto: Anansi, 1991, 16.

God created man and woman as unique individuals who are made in his image and are meant for community with himself and one another (Gen. 1:26-28).

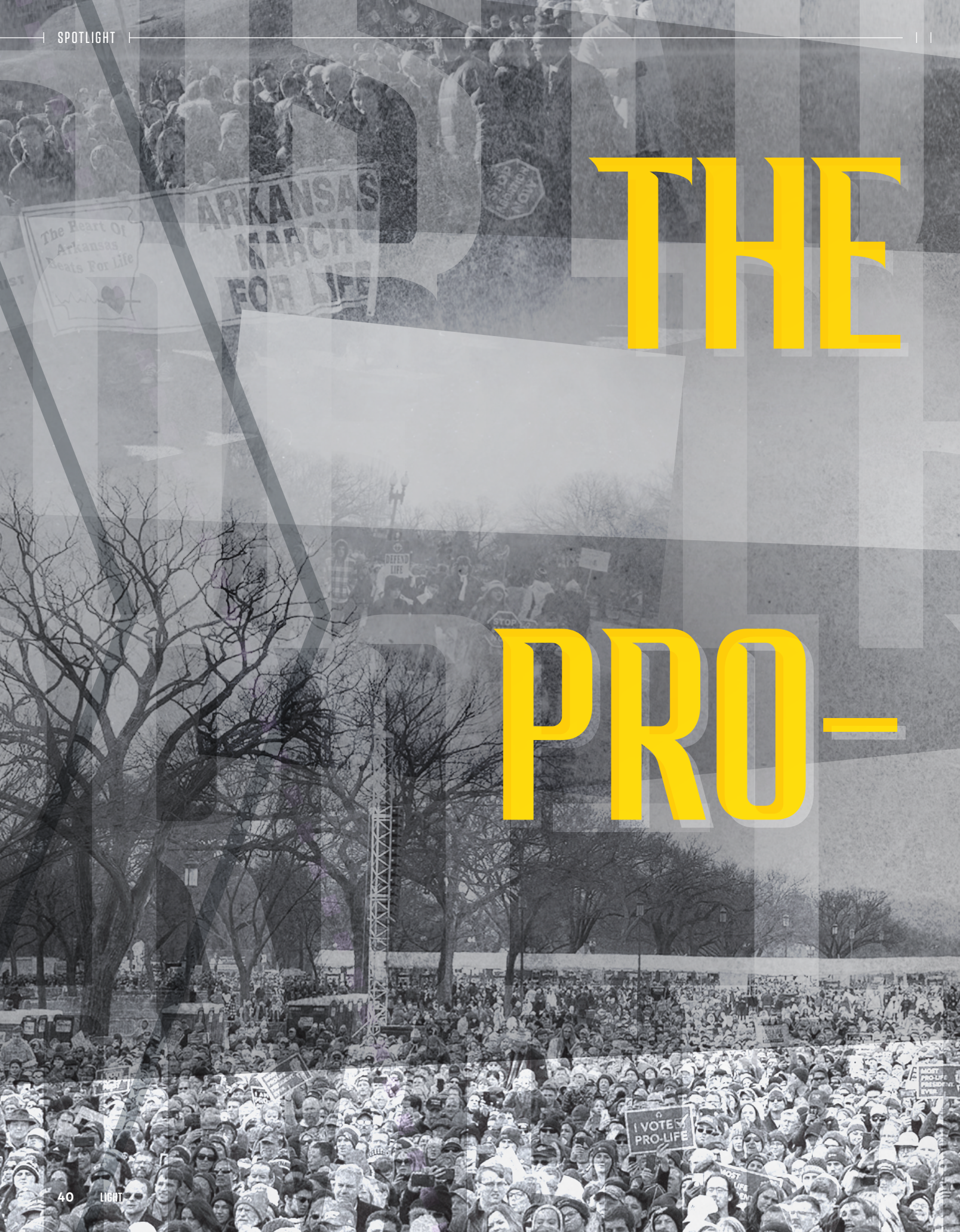
come across as a fun and modern chatbot that feels cutting edge and relational, it essentially aids in isolating a teenager during a difficult season and purposefully feeds them information about choosing to end an unborn child's life.

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

As our society continues to wade through the unintended consequences of our technological innovations, many in the church wonder if and how we should adopt technologies similar to Roo in order to counter

THE

PRO-



HISTORY OF THE

LIFE

From Pre-*Roe v. Wade* to the Holistic View
of Contemporary Advocates

Alex Ward

MOVEMENT





In August of 2017, Iceland made headlines because children born with Down syndrome were on the decline. However, this was not the result of medical advances or treatments for the genetic condition. Rather, it was revealed that women who found out their child had a diagnosis (or possible diagnosis) of Down syndrome were almost certain to have an abortion.

The news prompted swift reaction. Supporters of abortion saw this as a natural result of women having the right to choose what to do with their bodies and what kind of children they wished to bring into the world. But pro-life and disability advocates condemned the news and a culture that would discard children. It was but one moment in the long history of the pro-life movement—one that speaks up for those who have no voice and declares that these hidden persons possess inherent dignity and worth.

PRO-LIFE ADVOCACY BEFORE *ROE V. WADE*

Prior to the 19th century, abortion had been legal (in some instances) throughout much of the United States. Most of the early regulations were aimed at protecting women from unsafe practices, with “quickening”—when the baby could be felt moving—serving as a line for when

an abortion was permitted. However, as medical technology advanced and scientists were able to see the combination of genetic material from the parents that resulted in a fertilized egg, the line moved further backward. By the early 1900s, almost every state had criminalized abortion, though this was rarely enforced

In America, we often think of the pro-life movement arising from the decision of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. It is also often cast as a clear political divide, with those on the right opposing the practice and those on the left supporting it. However, as Daniel Williams has shown in his history of the movement, it has roots going back to at least the 1930s and 1940s, and there was no clear political divide.¹

At that time, Catholics (and it was primarily Catholics) were the strongest opponents of abortion on the grounds that it (along with contraception) was a violation of the official church teaching on the sanctity of human life. These Christians drew on the long tradition of Catholic social teaching and argued that care for the poor was a duty for Christians. On the basis of their theology, they found it easy to advocate for FDR’s New Deal program which created a stronger social safety net for the poor. And in the context of that moment, it was the poor, just as today, who were the most likely to receive (and suffer) from an abortion. Because of the limits on when doctors could provide abortions legally, it was common for women to obtain illegal and unsafe procedures which threatened their life.

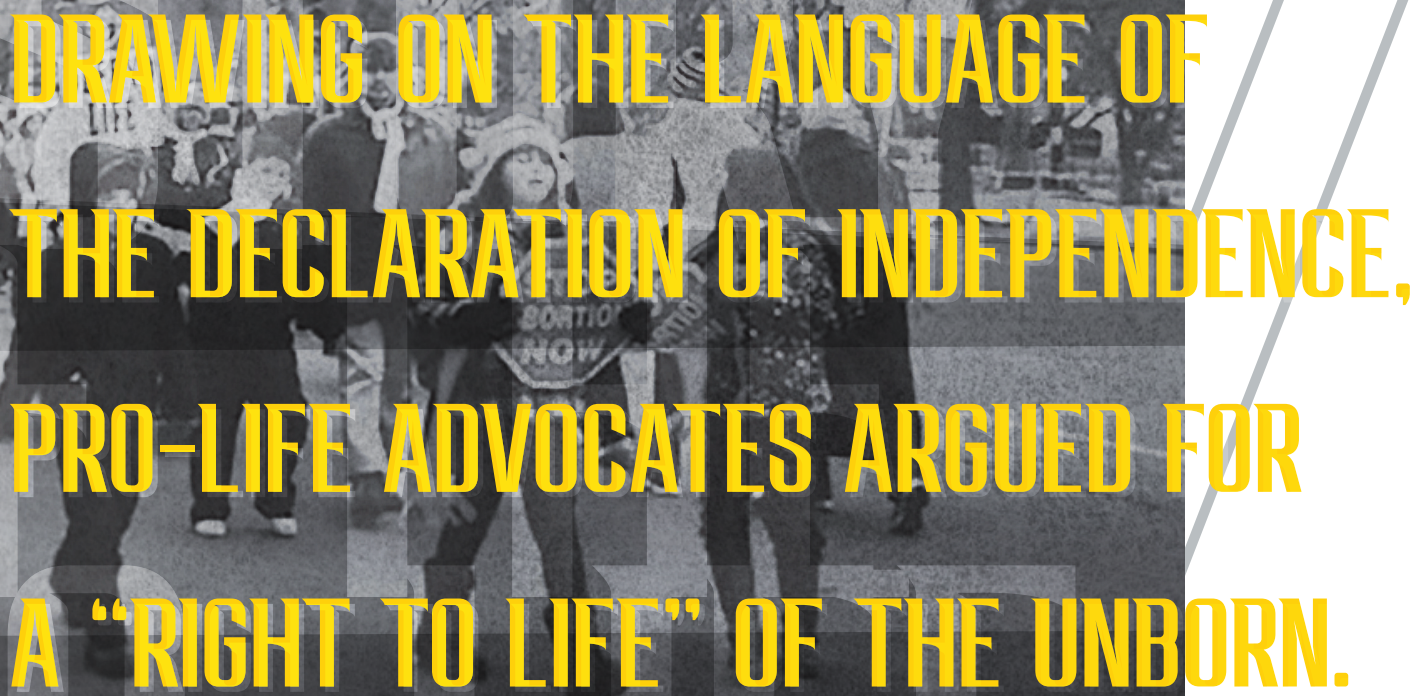
Protestants were largely unconcerned with the cause of abortion. Though some fundamentalists opposed the practice, most evangelicals were silent on the issue. And mainline Protestants, who made up the largest section of the religious landscape at the time, were moving from apathetic to sympathetic supporters, especially in the 1960s.



EXPANSION OF ABORTION ACCESS AND PRO-LIFE ADVOCACY BEYOND CATHOLICISM

In the 1960s, several states passed laws based on a revision to the legal framework proposed by the American Law Institute which allowed abortion for the physical or mental health of the mother, fetal deformity, or if the pregnancy were the result of rape, incest, or some other illegal action. Colorado was the first to pass the law, followed by North Carolina, and California (signed by then Gov. Ronald Reagan).

In 1970, New York debated and ratified a bill that permitted abortion-on-demand up to the six-month mark. Then in 1973, the Supreme Court ruled 7 to 2 in *Roe v. Wade*—drawing on a 1965 ruling that found a right to privacy with regards to contraception—that a person had a right to privacy in matters of abortion and states could not restrict abortion during the first trimester, though some restrictions could be implemented in the second and third trimesters. This framework



DRAWING ON THE LANGUAGE OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, PRO-LIFE ADVOCATES ARGUED FOR A “RIGHT TO LIFE” OF THE UNBORN.

would later be discarded in the 1992 case *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* which found that women could have an abortion before viability, and any restriction must not cause an undue burden on the mother’s right to seek an abortion.

Throughout this struggle, the debate was still largely a Catholic issue. No major Protestant groups were on record as opposing abortion, with only sporadic instances at the individual level. In fact, some were even supportive of the regulations at the time. The Southern Baptist Convention, the nation’s largest Protestant denomination, passed a resolution at its 1971 annual meeting affirming the sanctity of life, but also calling on Southern Baptists to work for legislation that would allow for abortion in the cases of rape, incest, fetal deformity, and the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother.

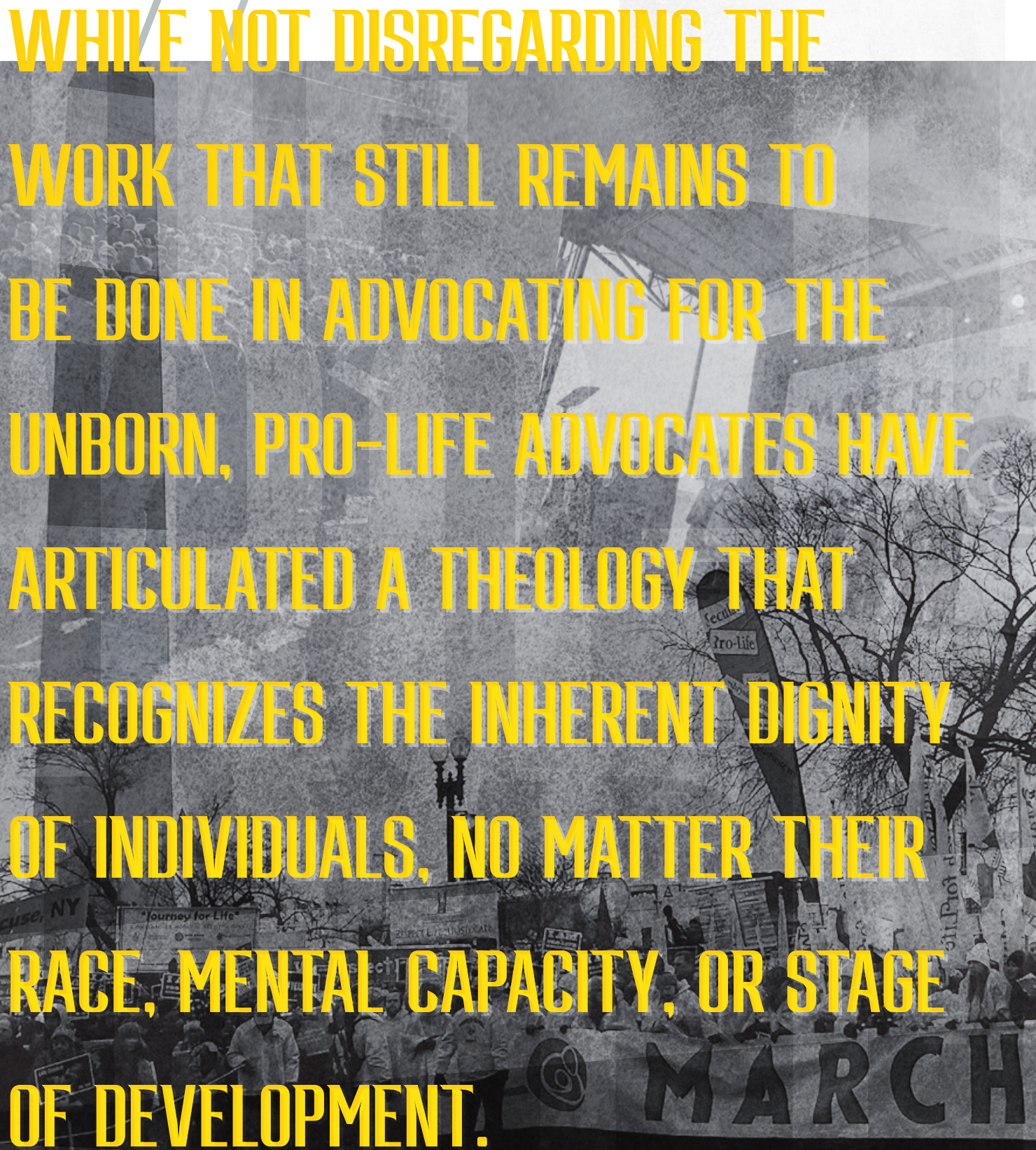
However, in the 1970s, with the rise of the Religious Right and the work of figures such as Paul Weyrich (a Catholic) and Jerry Falwell (a Baptist), evangelicals

would mobilize on the issue and bring it into the social consciousness of the average individual. This blending of Catholic and Protestant groups marked a pivotal turning point for the movement as it breathed new life and energy into it. The Catholics had already built out an infrastructure for working against abortion, most notably the National Right to Life Committee which was started in 1968 by Monsignor James T. McHugh at the request of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. However, Catholics had been losing the fight at almost every instance as state after state passed more liberal abortion laws. They also found themselves unable to bring in the support of others because of the anti-Catholic bias that was common in American religion at the time.

With the support of Protestants, particularly evangelicals who were politically minded, the movement came to be a major wedge issue. Though recent scholars such as Randall Balmer have cast doubts on the claim that it was abortion

which galvanized the leaders of the Religious Right, providing evidence of the late opposition to the cause, there is also substantial evidence that for many rank-and-file evangelicals, this topic captured their hearts like nothing else.²

Through the rise of sonogram machines (and the ability to see the child in utero), as well as literature and images that showcased the brutality of the procedure, most notably the 1984 film *The Silent Scream* that depicted an abortion, pro-life advocates began to work to counteract the narrative that this was a matter of personal choice. Drawing on the language of the Declaration of Independence, pro-life advocates argued for a “right to life” of the unborn. Additionally, they advocated before the courts and in state legislatures and Congress for just treatment. In 1976, the movement secured the passage of the Hyde Amendment which prevents the use of federal funds for abortion. And in 1984, the Mexico City policy, enacted by President Reagan, prevented U.S. aid to foreign countries being used for abortion.



**WHILE NOT DISREGARDING THE
WORK THAT STILL REMAINS TO
BE DONE IN ADVOCATING FOR THE
UNBORN, PRO-LIFE ADVOCATES HAVE
ARTICULATED A THEOLOGY THAT
RECOGNIZES THE INHERENT DIGNITY
OF INDIVIDUALS, NO MATTER THEIR
RACE, MENTAL CAPACITY, OR STAGE
OF DEVELOPMENT.**

CONTEMPORARY PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT: “WOMB TO TOMB”

In the recent decades, the fight has largely moved to the Supreme Court and individual state houses. There has been little significant change at the federal level which has led to an increased focus on state legislation. At the state level, pro-life advocates have succeeded in passing a number of anti-abortion regulations that severely limit the practice. Some have been aimed at pushing the line of viability further and further back (such as with fetal heartbeat bills), while others have restricted access through holding abortion clinics to the same standards as other medical providers. These regulations and bills face challenges at the Supreme Court which has made the nominating process so contentious for recent appointees, with some senators questioning just how strongly the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, which opposes abortion, bears on the judicial rulings of Catholic nominees.³

The face of the pro-life movement has also changed in recent years. What was once a (largely) white Catholic movement has come to be increasingly characterized by religious and racial diversity. With the influx of evangelicals and charismatic groups (and even some who are atheists), the pro-life movement has become more religiously diverse. Further, Latino and African American pro-life advocates, who are overrepresented in abortion statistics, have become important members in the coalitions working for systemic change in abortion laws.

Further, the pro-life movement has gone beyond just advocating for change to legal laws and now works to make abortion unthinkable. Through the vital work of pregnancy resource centers, churches and nonprofits provide medical care to women who would be seeking an abortion. This is a direct challenge to the work of organizations such as Planned Parenthood which profit from providing

easy access to abortion for low-income and minority women.

Additionally, the pro-life movement has, in recent years, expanded its vision from looking only at abortion to a more holistic pro-life ethic that is “womb to tomb.” While not disregarding the work that still remains to be done in advocating for the unborn, pro-life advocates have articulated a theology that recognizes the inherent dignity of individuals, no matter their race, mental capacity, or stage of development. Looking to combat all challenges to human dignity, this new pro-life movement has advocated for changes to the way immigrants and refugees are treated, opposed euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, and advocated for reform to systemic and racial inequality, recognizing that each individual is made in the image of God.

And there is considerable evidence to show that the pro-life argument is having an effect. At every turn, there are threats (as with the recent laws passed in Virginia and New York legislatures), but the United States is growing increasingly pro-life.⁴ According to the Guttmacher Institute, the rate of abortions has fallen below pre-*Roe* levels and continues to drop.⁵ Though some of this is attributable to easier contraceptive access and decreasing rates of teen pregnancy, it is also the result of the work of the pro-life movement setting forth the dignity of the unborn for almost a century. What began with mostly Catholics alone now includes thousands from across the ideological and religious spectrum each year proclaiming the value of each person from womb to tomb.⁶ As David French has noted, though there has been gridlock in Washington, the culture itself is becoming more pro-life.⁷ One reporter estimated that almost half of the attenders at the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. in 2010 were under

the age of 30.⁸ And with the advances of medical technology, the point of viability continues to be pushed further back as early in some cases as 22 weeks.⁹

In looking ahead, a post-*Roe* world—a major goal for the movement—would bring the cause back to the states to advance legislation. And with an end of abortion, there would undoubtedly be an increased need for the pro-life movement to show that it is not just opposed to abortion but truly cares about mother and child, from womb to tomb. ★

Alex Ward is a doctoral student at the University of Mississippi studying evangelical political activity in the 20th century.

1 Daniel Williams, *Defending the Unborn: The Pro-Life Movement Before Roe v Wade* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016).

2 Randall Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts Faith and Threatens America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2007).

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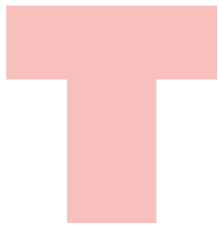
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THE HEROIC WORK OF PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTERS



A R O U N D T A B L E
D I S C U S S I O N
A B O U T V A L U I N G
L I F E A N D T H E
I N F L U E N C E O F
U L T R A S O U N D
M A C H I N E S

with Carol Graham | Jamie Dickerson | Shawn Powers



The ERLC's Psalm 139 Project has had the privilege of funding the placement of ultrasound machines in 22 different pregnancy resource centers, including the Sanchez Center, a Baptist Community Health Services (BCHS) clinic in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana; Liberty Women's Clinic in Liberty, Missouri; and Care Net Pregnancy Center near Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Launched in 2014, the Sanchez Center is operated by BCHS, which runs five clinics delivering a range of services from prenatal and elderly care to behavioral and mental health care. Its mission is to demonstrate the love of Christ by delivering high-quality healthcare services in medically underserved communities.

Since 2002, Liberty Women's Clinic (LWC) has sought to minister with the love of Christ by empowering people to make informed, life-affirming choices about pregnancy, sexual health, and relationships.

Likewise, Care Net Pregnancy Center is a ministry that seeks to partner with its clients by confirming pregnancy, extending comprehensive support, and cultivating healthy relationships to help them flourish.

Through the donation of ultrasound machines by the ERLC's Psalm 139 Project, these and other centers have had a notable effect on their surrounding communities, offering life-saving ultrasounds and influencing numerous pregnancy

decisions every year. We talked to the leaders of these incredible organizations about their ministry and the people they get to serve.

ERLC: What type of community do you serve?

Carol Graham, Liberty Women's Clinic: Liberty is a community of approximately 60,000 which includes Kansas City addresses. Because of our location, we serve women from urban, suburban, and surrounding smaller towns. During COVID-19 closures, we actually provided virtual services to women in every single county surrounding Kansas City.

Jamie Dickerson,

Care Net Pregnancy Center: The community we serve is diverse. We see a large percentage of Hispanic women and men, some of whom are undocumented immigrants. This reflects the population of our wider community. We also serve from high school students up to women in their 40s. The most common age range of women we serve is from 20-30. In addition, we have the opportunity to serve college students from New Mexico State University, including many international students.

Shawn Powers, BCHS: BCHS clinics are located in medically underserved communities, where we engage with patients of all backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses at little to no cost.

ERLC: How has the Psalm 139 Project affected your pregnancy resource center?

CG: The Psalm 139 project provided our clinic with a second ultrasound machine, offering the opportunity to double the number of scans within the current facility and hours.

JD: The Psalm 139 Project made it possible for us to start providing life-saving ultrasounds. We transitioned to being a medical pregnancy center this year with

We believe that providing women and men information about their options is a powerful tool in both saving and transforming lives.

-Jamie Dickerson

trained nurse sonographers. Now, in addition to providing free pregnancy tests, we are able to share images of unborn babies with their parents.

SP: With the ultrasound machine provided by the Psalm 139 Project, BCHS is able to convey the miracle of God-given life in the womb and develop relationships between parents and their children. The free ultrasounds help mothers understand the dignity and value of all life.

ERLC: How has the Lord used the sonogram machines to influence Kingdom work?

CG: A woman who is in the valley of despair between choosing life or death for her unborn child will change her mind almost 80% of the time after viewing her baby on an ultrasound. She is



LEFT: Las Cruces staff with an ultrasound machine. RIGHT: Caring for a mom and child at BCHS.

shown mercy, grace, truth, and the love of Christ during her interaction with staff and volunteers, perhaps affecting her entire future.

JD: We believe that providing women and men information about their options is a powerful tool in both saving and transforming lives. The sonogram machine adds a valuable layer in providing parents full information about the implications of their pregnancy decision. Though we have only been providing ultrasounds for a few short months, we have had the opportunity to see women choose life after viewing their baby on an ultrasound.

SP: The machine has helped communicate

the dignity and value of human life, setting in motion a relationship in which BCHS gets to walk with mothers and their children long after delivery to build community trust and long-term flourishing. With the machine, we're able to provide a service to patients who may not otherwise receive it, giving us the opportunity to minister to those in need.

ERLC: What usually happens after a woman sees her baby through an ultrasound?

CG: Typically, we see clients in their first stages of pregnancy. During those early weeks, the signs of pregnancy are usually morning sickness and a missed period. For the client, those symptoms

are not enough to make the pregnancy real. When a woman sees her baby in the ultrasound, a shift in thinking takes place. The client no longer sees her conditions as symptoms to be diagnosed but as signs of life growing in her womb, and a relationship is established. With the ultrasound, the client can make a truly informed decision about her pregnancy.

One of our first expecting moms who came in for an ultrasound had been to our center for a previous pregnancy and was fairly set on abortion. This time, she was unsure about how far along she was. She stated that seeing the images and the heartbeat on the ultrasound made a difference for her in making a pregnancy decision for life.



ERLC: How many women or couples come for advice, resources, and other services?

CG: In 2019, God worked through LWC with 3,900 services provided during 643 transformational client visits and 195 ultrasounds. We had 225 known decisions for life. At the halfway point of 2020, we were only slightly lagging behind our 2019 services provided number, even with the temporary closure of our physical clinic due to COVID-19. Despite the pandemic, we had 1095 appointments. And at our clinic, where 8 out of 10 women choose life, we received 433 abortion-seeking calls.

We've seen a spike in women leveraging our virtual services plus an increase in inquiries about abortions and abortion pills. We were blessed to stay "open" during this time to assist these women and continue to carefully provide client services as we worked slowly toward a full reopening. God has been faithful to continue to grow us.



TOP: An ultrasound machine at Las Cruces. BOTTOM: The Liberty Women's Clinic facility.

JD: In 2019, we served 587 unique clients with 1,346 total visits. These included free pregnancy tests as well as providing emergency baby and maternity supplies. In addition, we normally provide around 20,000 diapers to our community annually. During COVID, our numbers of diaper distribution have been even higher.

We have so much to celebrate despite the difficulties that 2020 brought with it. I will remember 2020 as the year that God answered my prayer and the prayers of so many for Care Net to become a medical clinic able to provide ultrasounds and even more care to each of our clients.

When our El Paso pregnancy center neighbors had to close because of COVID

Pregnancy resource centers are vital to proclaiming the dignity and right to life of preborn children, mothers, and fathers in unplanned pregnancy situations, and maybe especially so during trying times like a pandemic.

-Carol Graham

for a few weeks, we were able to see their clients who were in desperate need. We are still seeing the fruit from those weeks as we are walking with several of those clients as their babies are growing.

We provided 99 pregnancy tests and 47 ultrasounds for clients in 2020. We also increased the number of at-risk pregnancy test clients by more than 20% in the second half of 2020 compared to 2019. We ramped up the number of supplies we offered to the community. We received calls from so many people who needed diapers and wipes due to the scarcity created by the pandemic and provided over 25,000 diapers and so many other necessities to families last year.

ERLC: Do you have any additional information you can share that highlights the importance of pregnancy resource centers?

JD: There are 13,300 abortion-related

searches online each month in the Kansas City area. Approximately 3,708 pregnancies are ended yearly in the Kansas City metro area. And from March–June 2020, LWC staff fielded 75 phone calls from abortion-minded women during our critical time of offering exclusively virtual services. This is in addition to calls and texts from non-abortion-minded women. We know of 45 life decisions and two decisions to abort made during that same time period.

ERLC: Can you estimate how many pregnancies are saved per ultrasound machine at a pro-life pregnancy center?

CG: There were 225 lives saved at LWC during 2019, but we do not keep statistics per machine. However, the ultrasound machine we received from the ERLC is our first choice when it is available because the technology is newer and superior.

ERLC: What else would you share with those who are passionate about saving unborn babies as well as preserving life and the human dignity of others in the name of Jesus?

CG: Pregnancy resource centers are vital to proclaiming the dignity and right to life of preborn children, mothers, and fathers in unplanned pregnancy situations, and maybe especially so during trying times like a pandemic. LWC's mobile services coordinator summed up best the work of these centers—and the call for every Christian as we stand for life.

JD: The language we speak around issues of life and human dignity is as important as the actions we take. As we seek to minister to women, men, and the unborn, it is vital that we recognize the dignity of each person involved. They are each made in the image of God and deserve our love and respect no matter their circumstances.

In the pro-life arena, women often get thrown under the bus for the choices they have made. Our hope at Care Net of Las Cruces is to meet women right where they are, love them in that space, and walk with them as they seek information and help. We also firmly believe that standing for life includes so much more than words but includes meeting physical needs. This is important in every community because abortion is often chosen due to a lack of resources. But for us in Las Cruces, we see the ability to meet such needs as a unique and incredible opportunity to minister and honor life in our borderland.

BCHS: The abortion industry exploits underserved communities. But when these communities become a priority for those intent on preserving the life and human dignity of others, not only do these free ultrasound services save lives, but in our experience, they establish a relationship of trust. Often that trust results in parents bringing their kids to the clinic, becoming long-term patients. These ultrasound machines allow us not merely to save a life but to invest in the ongoing care of entire families. ★

Carol Graham is the founder & CEO of Liberty Women's Clinic.

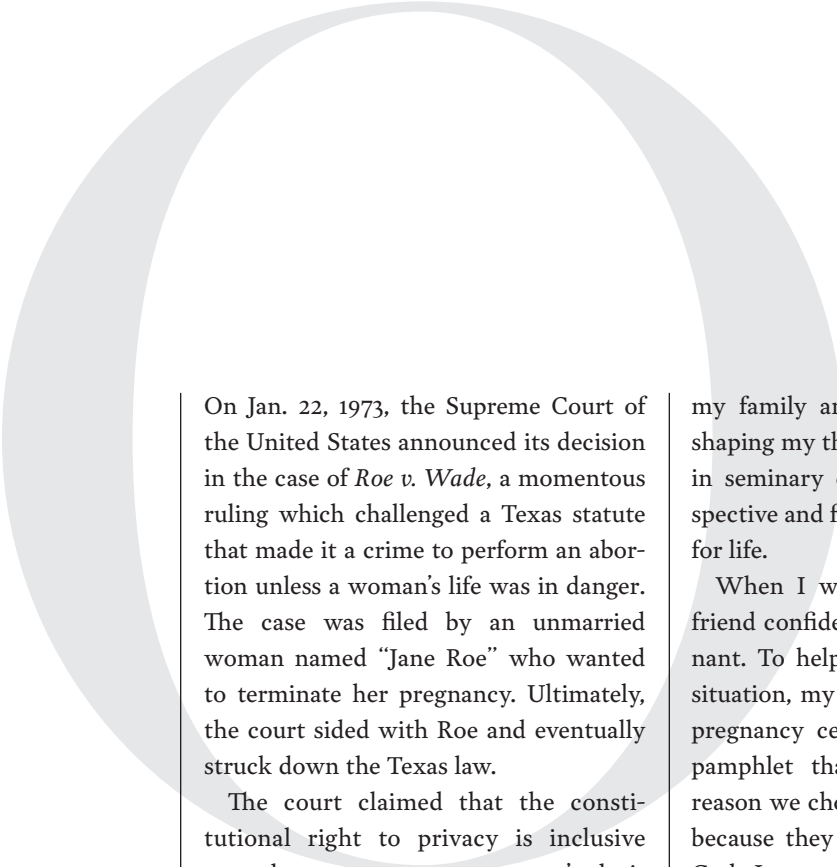
Jamie Dickerson is the executive director of Care Net of Las Cruces.

Shawn Powers is the CEO of Baptist Community Health Services (BCHS).

THE ROAD TO ROE50

A UNIFIED CALL TO ACTION
FOR THE PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

Elizabeth Graham



On Jan. 22, 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States announced its decision in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, a momentous ruling which challenged a Texas statute that made it a crime to perform an abortion unless a woman's life was in danger. The case was filed by an unmarried woman named "Jane Roe" who wanted to terminate her pregnancy. Ultimately, the court sided with Roe and eventually struck down the Texas law.

The court claimed that the constitutional right to privacy is inclusive enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy. Tragically, *Roe v. Wade* has become known as the case that legalized abortion nationwide, making abortion services more accessible to women throughout the country.

Jan. 22, 2023 will mark the 50th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* ruling, which is a significant moment for the pro-life movement. The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission calls this moment in time "ROE50."

MY PASSION FOR PRO-LIFE ADVOCACY

My passion for pro-life advocacy and a holistic view of life stems from a series of personal experiences and coming to an understanding of God's Word on this issue. I've considered myself pro-life for as long as I can remember, but watching

my family and friends choose life and shaping my theological perspective while in seminary deeply influenced my perspective and fueled my desire to advocate for life.

When I was in high school, a close friend confided in me that she was pregnant. To help me navigate this difficult situation, my mom took me to our local pregnancy center where I was given a pamphlet that discussed the ultimate reason we choose life for preborn babies: because they are made in the image of God. I was able to share this with my friend and continued to walk with her through her pregnancy. She was only 16, but her choice to give her baby life had a profound effect on my life.

A few years later, a close family member, who was on a sports scholarship in college, also had an unplanned pregnancy. Her doctor encouraged her to abort her baby, saying it was likely the best option. She knew abortion was not something she was willing to consider, so she redirected her college plans and shifted her life to care for her baby. Several years later, I watched that family member have another conversation with the same doctor who suggested she abort another baby due to a genetic issue.

I wish I had the time to tell you in detail the many other stories that influenced me—like participating in justice



advocacy work, walking alongside a family member when she endured a miscarriage, hearing a friend's adoption story, or being my grandfather's co-medical power of attorney when he was in the final months of his life. The Lord has used all of those instances to shape my pro-life ethic and passion and move me to stand for life.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

As I think about where the pro-life movement has been and where we are

going, it's important to take stock of where we are *today*. At present, the culture's worldview continues to permeate every area of life, and, sadly, the church is not immune to its influence. Secular philosophies have redefined the value of life and created programming and education that not only teach a diminished view of life's value, but desensitize society to a point where abortion is little more than a personal choice about "healthcare." These philosophies have deeply embedded themselves in our

terminology and education, training people to dissociate the actual life of a child from a decision they are making. Abortion becomes one of many options in the multitude of choices we have along life's journey.

Today, the church needs to better understand and articulate what it means to be made in the image of God. We need to embrace and model this truth for the world, that every person, at every stage of life has intrinsic value and dignity because each one has been stamped



WE MUST CREATIVELY AND CONSISTENTLY PROCLAIM THAT EVERY LIFE MATTERS, EVERY PERSON IS VALUABLE, AND THAT NO ONE IS EXPENDABLE.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

In 2023, 50 years will have passed since *Roe v. Wade* made abortion a permanent fixture in American culture. Since then, tens of millions of preborn babies' lives have been lost.¹ This statistic haunts me daily.

As an organization, the ERLC has been imagining what it could look like for the pro-life movement to develop a unified call to action ahead of this tragic milestone. We are beginning a journey that we call the Road to ROE50, which is a strategic window of opportunity to unify and accelerate effective strategies through pro-life work leading up to and following the 50th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*.

As we begin this journey on the Road to ROE50, we want to *raise awareness, inspire, educate, activate* and *mobilize* the church as we work toward making abortion unthinkable in our generation. Here are a few ways we plan to achieve those goals:

- **Broad Appeal Campaign:** A campaign that affirms/reaffirms an entire lifestyle alignment with the value of life. This is a commitment to the most important aspects of pro-life philosophy and to be a part of the solution.
- **Survey:** A pro-life survey that connects

people with their passions, then mobilizes and moves them to action.

- **Curriculum:** A curriculum and resource kit will be offered to churches in America, equipping them to stand for life by understanding what it means to be made in the image of God.
- **Tour:** The Road to ROE50 Tour will hit major metropolitan cities and college campuses to advance the momentum for January 2023 and inspire thousands to engage in the pro-life mission and work.
- **Conference:** The ROE50 Conference will inspire, mobilize, and activate a new generation of pro-lifers while at the same time breathing new life into the current pro-life movement.

We believe this is a critical and pivotal time in the life of the American church. Everyone has a role to play and a way to participate in the Road to ROE50. We hope you will consider joining us on this journey. ★

Elizabeth Graham is the vice president of Operations and Life Initiatives for the ERLC.

¹ <https://nrlc.org/uploads/factsheets/FS01Abortion-intheUS.pdf>

with God's image. We need what we think and believe to be shaped by the Word of God, not what we are taught in school or told to believe through other areas of culture.

And we must stand for life. We must creatively and consistently proclaim that every life matters, every person is valuable, and that no one is expendable. The pro-life message is that, from womb to tomb, every person matters because every person bears the image of God.



LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO US

Why the Church Should Care for the Vulnerable Through Adoption and Foster Care

David “Gunner” Gundersen

Daddy!” Our daughter was crying out my name for the first time. She was 4 years old, and we were staying in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for medical checks and visas so we could fly our three newest kids home. She didn’t know much English yet, but she knew what to call me. And she knew when to call me.

Her new brother, who was 3, had just taken a toy car from her. She’d tried to get it back, but having no real power, she eventually cried out to the only person in the room who could right the wrong and bring order to chaos. I walked over, figured out what had happened, and returned the

car to her. In that micro-world of toy-taking injustice, order was restored.

But what if I hadn’t been there?

On Your Own

For the first four years of her life, I wasn’t. Orphanage workers had done their heroic best, but children aren’t designed for systems and institutions, no matter how merciful their mission or excellent their care. Children are made for families.

I remember touring her large orphanage in the one opportunity we had to see it. At one point, we came across a roving pack of kids, and there was a commotion.

Some of the kids had taken a boy’s sandal, and he was yelling for it. A passing worker shouted something, and they tossed the boy’s sandal to the side and ran off, snickering.

A toy car. A stolen sandal. These are tiny wrongs in the annals of human grievance. But pile them up—and they do pile up—and they scar the spirits of those too young to understand but not too young to feel that their world is not the way it’s supposed to be. This constant vulnerability, with its unrighted wrongs and untreated wounds, sends a dark message to far too many children: you’re on your own in the world.

The Lord Comes

Psalm 98 sends an opposite message. In Psalm 98, seas roar, rivers clap, and hills break out singing. Why the celebration? Because “the Lord comes to judge the earth” (Ps. 98:7–9). This cosmic judicial action doesn’t just mean consequences for wrongdoing but the renewal of creation—the way things ought to be. The created world is longing to be “set free from its bondage to corruption” (Rom. 8:20–21). So when God finally arrives to set the world right, a celebration erupts.

But God doesn’t just wait until the end of time to start healing wounds, righting wrongs, and restoring order.

In these days between the first and second comings of Christ, God’s kingdom comes to earth in the form of his redeemed church, the new covenant family that calls Jesus “Lord.” As our Lord welcomed little children, we welcome them ourselves (Mark 10:13–16). The healthy church is an embassy of orphan-loving ambassadors, birthed out of the heart of an infinite Father.

Holy and Here to Help

Many Christians are familiar with James’ challenge to care for the vulnerable: “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (James 1:27). But why does James draw a connection between helping the vulnerable (“visit orphans and widows”) and personal holiness (“unstained from the world”)?

James is remixing lines from a hymn written by King David 1,000 years earlier: “Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitary in a home” (Ps. 68:5–6).

The world system, corrupt and polluted, worships power and position and prestige. In this value system, the weak and vulnerable mean little. But God sees the weakest in his world with the love of a creator, the heart of a father, and the moral commitment of a holy judge.

God, in his holiness, protects the vulnerable, so God’s family—by nature—does the same. Over and over, we’re told that we share his moral DNA. “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16). “Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God” (Eph. 4:24). “Be imitators

steer our kids straight into their fast-approaching adulthood.

Yet, our confidence in God’s calling to care for children in need has never wavered. Because I also know this: A stable family is its own therapy. Like a stream on a stone, families who choose this path shape and are shaped by the invaluable image-bearers God providentially brings us.

Abba, Father

Today, our four East African children are all teenagers. Their arguments aren’t about toys, and our conversations are mostly about school and decisions and truth and emotions and wisdom. My kids don’t cry out “Daddy!” anymore. But I do.

I cry out to my Father because I trust that the God who loved my kids before I ever knew them still

loves them better than I ever will. I cry out to my Father because I’m asking him to save them, give them godly spouses, and make them wise. I cry out to my Father because we’re all broken, and I need the Lord to come each morning with new mercies for our family. I cry out to my Father because the day I became their dad, I became their advocate, protector, and lifelong intercessor. And I cry out to my Father because he has all the wisdom and strength I need for raising my adopted children—because he adopted me. And someday, when I grow up, I hope to be just like him.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” (Rom. 8:15). ★

David “Gunner” Gundersen is a pastor at BridgePoint Bible Church in Houston, Texas.

**GOD, IN HIS HOLINESS, PROTECTS THE VULNERABLE.
SO GOD’S FAMILY—BY NATURE—DOES THE SAME.**

of God, as beloved children” (Eph. 5:1–2). “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:46). “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean . . . bring justice to the fatherless” (Isa. 1:16–17).

A Long Road

But there is no triumphalism here, no hagiography about the holiness of orphan care. Adoption and fostering can be hard for all involved—traumatic transitions for the kids, confusion and stress for parents and siblings, a long road of hoped-for healing with no guaranteed results. There are gravities that are hard to rise above, and ceilings that are hard to break through.

Most families who step forward to help vulnerable children will walk some very dark valleys. Sometimes I cringe when I reread my sincere but naïve enthusiasm about orphan care from many years ago. Now, mid-marathon, we’re just limping forward as parents, doing our best to





THE GLOBAL CAUSE FOR LIFE

PRO-LIFE CONCERNS IN ASIA AND EUROPE

Chelsea Patterson Sobolik

Every year, approximately 70 million abortions occur globally, ending the lives of precious unborn babies.¹ Around the world, an estimated 1 in 4 pregnancies end in an abortion every year.² As Christians, we ought to be deeply grieved by this reality and should be propelled to prayer and action.

Scripture tells us that every single life is precious to the Lord, and has innate dignity and worth. And throughout God's Word, it is clear that God values the preborn. At the climax of Creation, God created man and woman and then declared them to be "very good." In Psalm 139:13-16, we learn about God's intimate care for life in the womb.

CHRISTIANS SHOULD BOLDLY PROCLAIM THROUGH WORD AND DEED THAT EVERY SINGLE LIFE HAS INNATE DIGNITY AND VALUE.

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my

unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Therefore, Christians have a biblical mandate to care for life, following in God's footsteps by protecting and defending all life.

While there are many pro-life concerns within the United States, it's also important to remember that the issue of abortion doesn't cease at our border. Abortion is a multifaceted global issue and affects different parts of the world in unique ways.

SEX-SELECTIVE ABORTION

Approximately 140 million girls are "missing" globally due to sex-selective abortions and infanticide. While sex-selective abortions occur around the world, they are most prevalent in countries with a son preference. These countries and cultures believe that sons will give the family more prestige and will be able to better care for aging parents than daughters.³

The two most populous nations on earth, India and China, eliminate more girls each year than the number of girls that are born in the United States.⁴ According to the Invisible Girl Project, "while sex-selective abortion is technically illegal in India, the laws aren't enforced as they should be, and an estimated 700,000 girls are aborted every year. On average, one girl is aborted in India every minute just because she is a girl."⁵

China is the country with the most notable population of girls missing because they are targeted in the womb. As a result, there is a gender imbalance, and Chinese men don't have enough women to marry, resulting in bride trafficking and a sex trafficking industry.⁶ The bride trafficking industry preys on the poor and vulnerable and reduces women to their ability to produce offspring. It's dehumanizing and degrading.



God has designed us as male and female, and choosing to end the life of girls in the womb is a vile and wicked practice.

ABORTION BECAUSE OF DISABILITY

Several years ago, Iceland boasted that they had “basically eradicated” people with Down syndrome.⁷ As prenatal screening tests became more readily available in Iceland, almost 100% of unborn babies who received a positive test for Down syndrome were aborted. Even though people with Down syndrome can live long, full lives, many of them aren’t given a chance at life. Sadly, this predatory practice isn’t limited to Iceland. Throughout Europe and the United States, discriminatory abortion practices target unborn babies who potentially have a disability.

In Denmark, 98% of unborn babies with Down syndrome are aborted. In the United Kingdom, 90% of women with a Down syndrome diagnosis for their child chose abortion.⁸ According to George Will, a columnist for *The Washington Post*, “In 2016, a French court ruled that it would be ‘inappropriate’ for French television to run a 2 ½-minute video (“Dear Future Mom”) released for World Down Syndrome Day, which seeks to assure women carrying Down syndrome babies that their babies can lead happy lives, a conclusion resoundingly confirmed in a 2011 study ‘Self-perceptions from people with Down syndrome.’”⁹

FORCED ABORTIONS

Since 2017, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has waged a systemic campaign of oppression and persecution against Uyghur Muslims, a predominantly Turkic-speaking ethnic group.¹⁰ The CCP has used totalitarian tactics like pervasive surveillance, thought control, ideological reeducation, forced birth control, and compulsory labor. Uyghur women are subjected to forced pregnancy checks, medication that stops their menstrual period, forced abortions, and surgical sterilizations. One of the major reasons that these women are even sent

to the internment camps is for having too many children.

The CCP has waged a long and dreadful war against women, and more specifically, as mentioned above, against baby girls. Through the coercion of the one- and two-child policies, it created a gender imbalance as stark as 120 boys for every

WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO CHOOSE LIFE FOR THEIR BABIES AFTER SEEING AN ULTRASOUND PHOTO.

100 girls. Families in China often had to seek the approval of local family-planning officials just to have a child, even if they hadn’t already reached the one-child cutoff.¹¹ To meet quotas and restrict population growth, women were subject to forced abortions, and both men and women were forced to have sterilizations.¹²

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

The Trump administration’s Office of Global Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) led the U.S. in signing the Geneva Consensus Declaration, a “historic document that further strengthens an ongoing coalition to achieve better health for women, the preservation of human life, support for the family as foundational to a healthy society, and the protection of national sovereignty in global politics.”¹³ It was co-sponsored by the United States, Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, and Uganda, and co-signed by

32 countries in total, representing more than 1.6 billion people. While the Biden administration has removed the U.S. from the Geneva Consensus Declaration, the important work will continue since it was a multilateral statement.¹⁴

One of the key parts of the declaration is the reaffirmation “that there is no international right to abortion, nor any international obligation on the part of States to finance or facilitate abortion, consistent with the long-standing international consensus that each nation has the sovereign right to implement programs and activities consistent with their laws and policies.” It should be encouraging for those in the pro-life movement to see countries band together to protect the unborn in their nation.¹⁵

INTERNATIONAL ULTRASOUND MACHINE

The ERLC advocates for life domestically and abroad. One of the ways the ERLC is involved in the preservation of the unborn is through the Psalm 139 Project—an “initiative designed to make people aware of the life-saving potential of ultrasound technology in crisis pregnancy situations and to help pregnancy centers minister to abortion-vulnerable women by providing ultrasound equipment for them to use.”¹⁶

This work is vital because women are more likely to choose life for their babies after seeing an ultrasound photo of their unborn little one.¹⁷ The ERLC’s Psalm 139 Project has pledged to fund its first international placement of an ultrasound machine in a Christian, pro-life ministry in Northern Ireland.

In 2019, Northern Ireland legalized abortion for the first time in its history. The ERLC will aid the cause of life there and help women choose life for their children. The partnering organizations will be Both Lives Matter, an organization that advocates for both the mother and preborn child, and Evangelical Alliance, a group that unites Christians from across the wider United Kingdom on issues important to believers.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

Christians should boldly proclaim through word and deed that every single life has innate dignity and value. We should seek to be on the frontlines of protecting and defending life, both domestically and abroad. May we resolve to regularly pray for the lives of the unborn and their mothers around the world. May we ask the Lord to give government leaders the courage to pass pro-life laws and uphold the dignity of their unborn children. May we pray that women in vulnerable situations would have the support needed to give life to their children. And may we resolve never to remain silent about God’s care and compassion for every life. ★

Chelsea Patterson Sobolik is an ERLC policy director.

1 https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/induced-abortion-worldwide?gclid=CjoKCQJw9_mDBh-CGARIsAN3PaFMAiLKWFLDptZZNYpIFEx-gDd5DjMF-WaCBqg3PUK7k774RIWJmHv-jUaAvqhEALw_wcB

2 <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/induced-abortion-worldwide>

3 <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>

4 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/too-many-men/>

5 <https://invisiblegirlproject.org/the-issue/feticide/>

6 <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3117253/how-chinas-missing-women-problem-has-fuelled-trafficking-and-forced>

7 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/whats-the-real-down-syndrome-problem-the-genocide/2018/03/14/3c4f8ab8-26ee-11e8-b79d-f3d931db7f68_story.html

8 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/whats-the-real-down-syndrome-problem-the-genocide/2018/03/14/3c4f8ab8-26ee-11e8-b79d-f3d931db7f68_story.html

9 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/whats-the-real-down-syndrome-problem-the-genocide/2018/03/14>

10 <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/how-the-chinese-communist-party-is-persecuting-uyghur-muslims/>

11 <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/51f61ea04.pdf>

12 <https://www.npr.org/2016/02/01/465124337/how-chinas-one-child-policy-led-to-forced-abortions-30-million-bachelors>

13 <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/10/22/trump-administration-marks-signing-geneva-consensus-declaration.html>

14 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/28/memorandum-on-protecting-womens-health-at-home-and-abroad/>

15 Ibid.

16 <https://psalm139project.org/>

17 <https://www.care-net.org/center-insights-blog/why-ultrasounds-matter-for-women-planning-abortion>

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Life After Roe

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE
WE'VE LONGED FOR

Josh Wester

The pro-life movement is built on hope. From funding adoptions to supporting crisis pregnancy centers to fighting legal battles, every aspect of pro-life work is fueled by hope. And not just hope in an abstract sense—but a specific and abiding belief that each step to advance the cause of human dignity could mean the difference between life and death.

Likewise, the pro-life vision is fueled by a belief in a future where every human life, at every stage of life, is valued, respected, and fully protected by law.

For almost 50 years, the pro-life coalition has fought tirelessly to see the demise of the single greatest impediment to this vision: *Roe v. Wade*. Though it's no longer the primary legal precedent buttressing abortion, *Roe* has become synonymous with on-demand abortion in American life.¹ Understandably then, seeing the Supreme Court reverse *Roe* and related decisions on abortion has become a central aim of the pro-life agenda. To state it succinctly, an America after *Roe* is the future pro-lifers long for.

But are we prepared for this future?

WHAT THE END OF *ROE* WOULD MEAN

Asking the question almost seems silly. In a sense, the pro-life community has been anticipating the reversal of *Roe* since the decision was first handed down in 1973. And in the intervening years, that anticipation has only intensified. Those dedicated to the cause of life long for the day when elective abortion—that is, the purposeful destruction of innocent human life in the womb—no longer enjoys the protection of federal courts. Indeed, that day cannot come soon enough. But even so, there is another sense in which I fear even ardent pro-lifers remain ill-prepared.

Should *Roe* fall, such a ruling would not make abortion illegal nationwide. Instead, it would merely revert the issue back to the states. And while I have no doubt that the legal dimension of the pro-life movement stands ready to continue the fight

for life in the courtrooms and state legislatures across the country where elective abortions would still be legal, I am less certain about our movement's readiness to meet the tremendous demands that would arise in those states where elective abortions would no longer be permissible.

Back in October, *The New York Times* estimated that the reversal of *Roe* would result in 22 states immediately blocking elective abortions.² Further, recent data from the Guttmacher Institute indicates that, by itself, the end of *Roe* would likely result in 100,000 less abortions taking place every year.³ Those are staggering numbers to contemplate. They also represent a necessary corrective to those who insist the pro-life movement's efforts to mount a legal challenge to *Roe* are misguided. In addition to stopping abortion in nearly half the Union, the end of *Roe* would mean the survival of 100,000 people.

Don't miss the gravity of this: 100,000 people with DNA, bodies, and faces. One-hundred thousand future neighbors, friends, and co-workers. One-hundred thousand brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. One-hundred thousand people. One-hundred thousand children.

But this brings us back to the point about preparation. One-hundred thousand people is a massive number, and it is only one part of the story. Immediately, we recognize that this number represents roughly the same number of mothers facing unplanned or difficult pregnancies. And in many cases, it also represents fathers and families in crisis. Who will care for them? Who will step up to serve these families and meet their needs?

The pro-life movement is more mosaic than monolith. It is made up of countless men and women from diverse backgrounds, professions, and religions. And in all 50 states, members of this movement are working in various ways to create a culture of life by meeting the needs of women and families facing crisis pregnancies and those in need of other kinds of familial assistance. This work takes many different shapes, but

among the most important is the essential care provided in local pregnancy resource centers spread throughout our nation. Whether you consider yourself to be pro-life or not, you should visit one of these centers. See for yourself the kind of life-altering love on display at each one of these

**IN SEEKING
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ROE, THE
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special places. These centers not only save lives but change people's futures, reshape their stories, and give them hope.

**MORE WORK,
MORE OPPORTUNITIES**

But in seeking the end of *Roe*, the pro-life movement is not asking for a future with less work, but so much more. Should *Roe* fall, the practical fallout will likewise be massive. Scores of women and families who may otherwise have turned to abortion will turn instead to pregnancy resource centers, churches, and other religious organizations in their communities for assistance and support. Faith-based adoption and foster care agencies will see a spike in the number of children they're caring for. Needs will increase across the board—for financial support, for volunteers, for clothes and other supplies, for adoptive and foster parents, and on and on.

In many ways, the true test of the pro-life movement will not be its fervent opposition to abortion but whether its commitment to the cause of life will sustain it through something as cataclysmic as the end of *Roe*. And the time to prepare is now. In our churches, are we teaching a gospel-infused pro-life, whole-life ethic that not only stands against abortion but for human dignity? In our legal efforts, are we prepared to advance not just policies to stop abortion but policies to promote human flourishing and assist mothers and families welcoming new life? Are pro-lifers prepared to serve more, give more, love more, and sacrifice more to prove that our beliefs are more than words? Are we truly prepared to stand for life?

With a freshly minted conservative majority on the Supreme Court, the end of *Roe* appears to be attainable for the first time in decades. Obviously, there is no guarantee. But the pro-life coalition cannot afford to be caught off guard. We have worked so long and fought so hard to see that day. Indeed, it is the vision that fuels our movement. But just as we hope for a future where all of our children are safe, we must also prepare for that future so that all may know the hope upon which our movement is built.

Let us, in the name of Christ, prepare to receive all who come with open arms. May we demonstrate his love, embrace those in need, and model for them the hope that lives within us. ★

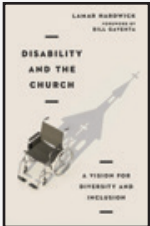
Joshua B. Wester serves as chair of Research in *Christian Ethics*.

1 It is well known that the Supreme Court's *Roe* decision legalized abortions in the first, and in many cases the second trimesters of pregnancy in the United States. Lesser known is the fact that in 1992 the Court issued a decision in another case involving abortion, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which reaffirmed *Roe*'s "essential holding" about a woman's right to an abortion before viability and established a new basis from which to measure abortion restrictions known as the "undue burden" standard.

2 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/10/15/upshot/what-happens-if-roe-is-overturned.html>

3 <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/abortion-incidence-service-availability-us-2017>

Becoming a Pro-Life Voice



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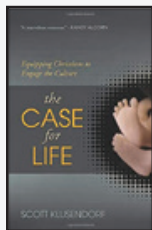
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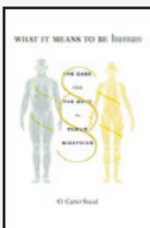
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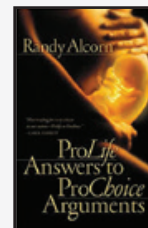
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The ERLC will always

STAND FOR LIFE



We believe in the dignity of every human life because each person is created in the image of God. As the ERLC continues to stand for life, we will resource the local church through curriculum, content, and events; advocate for pro-life legislation; and place life-saving ultrasound machines in pregnancy resource centers. Believing that abortion can end in our lifetime, will you join us as we STAND FOR LIFE?

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