

AN EXCERPT FROM:

THE

ALTERNATIVE

TO

ABORTION

WHY WE MUST BE
PRO **ABUNDANT** LIFE

APOLOGETIC:

IS THE PRO-CHOICE POSITION
CONSISTENT WITH THE LIFE AND
TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST?

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APOLOGETIC:

Is a Pro-Choice Position Consistent With the Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ

Throughout this book, I have expounded on the need to reach Christians who profess to be pro-choice. However, given the urgent need to address this challenge, below is a comprehensive four-part apologetic framework based on the words and life of Jesus to use in your discussions. Also, I encourage you to visit Care Net's website to order copies of the booklet, "Is the Pro-Choice Position Consistent with the Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ?" You can also use the QR code or go to www.resources.care-net.org/pro-choice-christians-ebook/ to get a free downloadable PDF.



Is the Pro-Choice Position Consistent with the Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ?

This is a critical discussion at this moment in our nation's and the church's history because it is very clear that there is disunity in the Christian community regarding the life issue. The evil one and injustice always thrive in such an environment. Moreover, it is not just enough that Christians are pro-life, but that they also understand why they are pro-life. There are those

who are pro-life because of personal politics or family traditions. There are also those who feel called to provide material support for women in need. But the “why” for our pro-life position must be firmly anchored in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel alone provides the most biblically durable and steadfast reasoning for the pro-life position. Only with the gospel is our pro-life conviction capable of weathering the challenges of life, the storms of circumstances, and the press of temptation. It is important for each one of us to proactively become ambassadors for the unborn to our pro-choice Christian brothers and sisters. The book of James reminds us that if a brother or sister “wanders from the truth,” we should seek to bring them back. So, I want to equip you to lovingly have these conversations. Indeed, you are uniquely positioned to have these vital conversations because you are in relationships with pro-choice Christians who may be your friends, family members, and even your spouse. Accordingly, what follows is a pro abundant life apologetic that I believe God laid on my heart, specifically for Christians, based on Christ’s own words and life. The apologetic, or argument, is organized into four questions and responses:

1. How does support for abortion fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission?
2. When did Jesus’s human life begin and how should this fact affect a Christian’s view of abortion?
3. What does Mary’s unplanned pregnancy tell Christians about the abortion decision?
4. How should uncertainty about when life begins lead a Christian to view the abortion decision?

1.) How does support for abortion fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission?

As Christians, we are called to live out two great initiatives in our private lives: the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. These two bookends of the Christian faith represent Christ’s call to all of us, and we are

charged to promote and proclaim them in the public square.

The Great Commandment is found in the Gospel accounts of Matthew and Mark. Jesus also presents the Great Commandment as the answer to a question that was asked of him in Luke 10:25–37. A lawyer comes to him and says, “What must I do to inherit the kingdom of God?” It’s a question any Christian should be asking. Of course, Jesus didn’t chastise him. Instead, we read that he leaned into the question because he thought it was a good one. And he responded, “What do the scriptures say?” The lawyer responded, “You should love your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus gives him the thumbs up—this is the Great Commandment. In other parts of Scripture, Jesus teaches how all of Scripture is hanging on these truths.

One can even see the Great Commandment in the creation story in Genesis. God created Adam and then He created Adam’s neighbor, Eve, from Adam’s rib bone. Eve was bone of Adam’s bone; so, when Adam loved Eve, he was loving her like himself, because she was, in a real sense, himself. Therefore, until sin broke this love relationship with God and between neighbors in the garden, we had the Great Commandment in action. Whenever there is conflict in any human relationship—family or society—it reflects a breakdown or violation of the Great Commandment.

Three Loves

The Great Commandment rests on three loves: love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self. When I started to reflect on this in the context of the life issue and abortion, I believe God gave me an amazing insight about the word “neighbor.” In the Greek, it means “near one” or “near fellow.” So, loving your neighbor as yourself means “loving your near one as you love yourself.”

And when you look at the word “love” that is used in this verse, it is the highest love possible. In the Greek it is *agapē*, or agape love in English. It is a sacrificial love. The same word for love that is used in John 3:16: “For God so

loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” It is also used in John 15:13: “Greater love has no one than this, that he lays down his life for his friends.” So, per the Great Commandment, we are supposed to have a sacrificial love for our neighbors, our near ones.

How does this relate to the life issue? If a woman is pregnant, who is her nearest near one? Nearness can be considered in two ways—physical proximity and relationship proximity. Think “next of kin.” In the case of a pregnant woman, it is her baby, growing in her womb. Her baby is as physically and relationally close to her as possible.

Now, if a man got a woman pregnant, who is his near one? In this context, the vulnerable woman certainly is his neighbor, but also the baby in her womb—bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. That is his nearest near one—his next of kin.

So, whether we profess to be pro-life or pro-choice, we must as Christians ask ourselves a question: “How is the decision to abort a baby, one of God’s image bearers, an act of sacrificial love toward God?” Or, more succinctly, how does aborting a child align with the Great Commandment? Remember, Jesus said this commandment is the first and greatest: to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself.

As Christians, we must then ask ourselves a second question: “How is aborting your near one, this baby in the womb, an act of sacrificial love for your neighbor?” Again, there are three inseparable loves in this passage—love for God, love for neighbor, and love for self. If you separate these loves, the virtue of the Great Commandment can become a vice. For example, if one loves God but does not love his neighbor, 1 John 4:21 declares, “And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” And, if one loves his neighbor but does not love God, that is humanism, where one’s love for neighbor is not anchored in anything immutable. It is like a boat tied to another boat, but not to a dock. Things are fine until the storms and challenges of life come and your neighbor’s boat starts pulling you into rough water. In those cases, we tend to cut the rope, don’t we? With humanism, our neighbors can easily become lives worth sacrificing.

Indeed, abortion is an act that declares from its core, “I don’t love God and I don’t love my neighbor, but I do love myself.” This type of self-love becomes the vice of idolatry. So the sacrificial love for others that Jesus calls us to in the Great Commandment becomes a sacrificing love for self—the vulnerable little one in the womb becomes a child sacrifice. A life worth sacrificing, not a life worth sacrificing for. The virtue becomes a vice.

The Story of the Good Samaritan

Returning to Luke, where Jesus lays out the Great Commandment, the lawyer responds to Jesus by asking, “So who is my neighbor?” The lawyer, realizing he is called to a sacrificial love, tries to narrow the scope. It’s much like when Peter asked Jesus, “How many times must I forgive my brother and sister who sins against me?” Sometimes as Christians, we are tempted to minimize a higher calling when we are face to face with it. We ask questions like, “How little do I need to do to get into heaven?” But Jesus didn’t answer the lawyer’s question directly. He answered the question with a story: that of the Good Samaritan.

In that story, a vulnerable person—at risk and unable to advocate for himself—had been injured by robbers and left on the side of the road to die. A priest comes by but moves to the other side of the road to distance himself and get by. Later, a Levite does the same. But when a Samaritan comes along, he draws close to the dying man, binds his wounds, and takes him to an inn. He cares for the vulnerable person with a sacrifice of time, talent, and treasure.

The “people of the Book,” the priest and the Levite, moved far from the near one—the neighbor. They “aborted” him in his time of vulnerability. They had their reasons—spiritual, ministry-related, political, and maybe even social justice reasons. But their reasons did not align with biblical justice, which requires sacrificial care for the vulnerable. The Samaritan’s act shows us that the pursuit of righteousness (which should have been the focus of the priest and the Levite) must be linked to the pursuit of justice and mercy if we are to truly live out the agape love required by the Great Commandment.

After Jesus tells the story, he then asks the lawyer, “Now, who was a neighbor to the person who fell?” The lawyer replies, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus instructs, “Go and do likewise.” In other words, be a neighbor to your neighbor. The Hebrew root of the word “mercy” further bolsters the beauty of this story. The Hebrew root for the words “mercy” and “compassion” is the same root as the word for “womb.” So, the Good Samaritan put this vulnerable person in a “womb.” We are called to model his example by showing sacrificial love to our neighbors.

The Mercy of the Womb

The womb of a mother is a place of mercy. Indeed, our mother’s womb is a point of vulnerability that we share with every other person alive today, or who has ever lived. And the only language that babies in the womb have to express themselves is their heartbeats. I believe that every baby’s heartbeat says, “Have mercy...Have mercy...Have mercy.” And every time a mother hears that heartbeat, she hears, “Have mercy...Have mercy... Have mercy.”

For all of us living today, our mothers responded, like the Good Samaritan, with agape love. A sacrificial love that says our lives were not worth sacrificing, but rather lives worth sacrificing for. In other words, the only reason any of us are here today is because our mothers, at least in that moment, followed the Great Commandment.

That is why, when you look at the life issue through the lens of the Great Commandment, you see a uniquely Christian, pro abundant life apologetic straight from the mouth of Jesus. So, for Christians who profess to be pro-choice, they must reconcile their perspective with the Greatest Commandment of Jesus himself. Whether it’s human trafficking, food security, helping the incarcerated, or caring for the poor, the Great Commandment is the standard we must use to direct our actions for every issue. When Christians who profess to be pro-choice look at the life issue through this lens and link it to the story of the Good Samaritan, they are far more likely to come to a pro-life perspective.

The Great Commission

The other bookend of our call as Christians is the Great Commission, which is found in Matthew 28:19–20. The Great Commission calls us to make disciples and to teach them to obey all that Christ taught us.

First, what is “all that Christ taught us?” Thankfully, Christ made this simple for us when he said of the Great Commandment, “On these two commandments the whole law and the prophets depend.” In other words, living out the Great Commandment prepares us to fulfill the Great Commission.

Second, we are called to make disciples...of whom? Our neighbors...our near ones. Every parent’s first “discipleship calling” is to the children with whom God blesses them. For Christians professing to be pro-choice, how is aborting their children—those who they are to make disciples of Jesus Christ—an act of disciple making? That is the equivalent of missionaries going to a foreign land to make disciples and then killing everyone there; sacrificing them so that they can have better lives for themselves. In fact, this is a common criticism of some early missionary efforts; their “disciple making” consisted of subjugating and even killing those who they were called to love sacrificially.

Again, the act of abortion is a violation of the Great Commandment, but it is also a violation of the Great Commission, a calling of all followers of Christ.

2.) When did Jesus’s Human Life Begin?

A Christian who professes to be pro-choice might respond to the above argument—that abortion violates the Great Commandment and the Great Commission—by saying, “I agree that Christians are supposed to have compassion and mercy on the baby in the womb. But what if I don’t believe it’s a baby? What if I don’t believe it’s a person yet?”

Accordingly, it is critical to inspect what Scripture says about “personhood.” Does the Bible have a perspective on when the “contents” of an expecting mother’s womb become a baby?

Many parts of Scripture address this but looking at the life of Jesus himself—and his experience of being like us—can make for a more compelling case for us as Christians than isolated verses.

The central question for the pro-choice Christian is, “When did Jesus’s human life begin?” The answer is critical because our entire Christian faith and salvation depend upon it. Jesus was a perfect substitute for us. Was Jesus in fact both fully God and fully human? Jesus’s humanity has to match our humanity in every respect or else he’s not a perfect substitute for us and we are lost.

Several passages in Scripture address this principle. Hebrews 2:17 says, “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” 1 Peter 2:24 says, “He himself [Jesus] bore our sins in his body on the tree.” Colossians 2:9–10 says, “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.”

So, if Scripture establishes Jesus as fully God and fully man, then the question becomes, “When did Jesus’s humanity begin?” Isaiah 7:14 says, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son.” Here, the Bible addressed both conception and birth. Even though the mechanics of Jesus’s conception were different, the reality of his conception and birth were the same as ours—“made like his brothers in every respect” (Hebrews 2:17). A helpful analogy is artificial insemination; for a child who comes into the world via artificial insemination, the initial mechanics are different from the way children typically come into the world, but the practical reality of their conception and birth are the same. From conception on, there is no difference.

This is exactly what you see in the birth of Christ, and that is why it is critically important to establish biblically that Jesus’s life began at conception. Because if Jesus’s human life began at conception, then ours had to begin at conception as well. If not, then Jesus cannot be the perfect substitute for us and take on our sin, and our entire faith crumbles.

So, if a Christian who professes to be pro-choice argues that you’re not actually a person in the earliest stages of pregnancy—you’re not actually a life—then Jesus was not a life at this stage in his humanity either. If one

were to believe this, then they must also believe there was a point at which Jesus in his incarnation, God himself, was not alive. This idea, of course, is inconsistent with the very definition of God, who can never not “be.” “I Am that I Am,” means that God always is. He has always been that way, and He will always be that way.

I heard a pro-choice Christian once argue that the baby in the womb is not a life but is a “potential life.” I understand why a person would try to make that argument. When trying to support an abortion decision, this reasoning sounds better than, “It’s a life, but a life worth sacrificing.” The problem with the concept of “potential life” is that anything that has potential can be something else. A coach can say of a football player who joins his team, “That guy’s got a lot of potential,” but the player can turn out to be a bust. Potential is not always reality. If it is potentially something, then it potentially can be something else. But Jesus could not be a potential life in the womb. Why? Because He cannot and could not be anything else other than what He is—fully God and fully man, alive in Mary’s womb from the moment of conception.

Potential also brings with it the concept of uncertainty. When you say of the football player, “He’s got potential,” uncertainty is built into that statement. But being God means there is no uncertainty on any matter or in any circumstance. God always operates in certainty.

This line of thinking—that there is a period of time after conception that an unborn baby is not yet a life—can lead to another dangerous fallacy: the belief that life is “constructed” in the womb. Babies are not constructed in the womb like a Tesla on an assembly line. When is a Tesla truly a Tesla? When the wheels are put on? When they put on the nameplate? I submit that a Tesla is never intrinsically a Tesla. Why? Because at any point you can turn a Tesla into a toaster. It always has the potential to be something else.

But babies are not constructed; they develop. That’s why there are classes on human development, not human construction. Once conceived, a baby cannot be anything else. Much like a Polaroid picture, once you take it, it can only be what the lens saw. When you first look at an undeveloped Polaroid, it looks like a black square. But “in the fullness of time,” it develops into what the lens captured, and only that. You can’t take a picture of an apple and have

it develop into a picture of an orange. It is intrinsically what it is and can't be anything else—just like Christ in Mary's womb and just like any baby in a mother's womb. There is no uncertainty, from the moment of conception.

3.) Mary's Pregnancy with Christ

The third argument revolves around the stories we read in Luke's Gospel account of Christ's birth, Mary's pregnancy with Christ, and her visit to Elizabeth. When the angel comes to Mary and tells her that she's going to conceive and bear a child, the angel also reveals that her cousin, Elizabeth, is also going to have a child who has already been conceived.

A few aspects of this story are significant to the life issue. First, Mary faced an "unplanned pregnancy" from a human perspective. She had hopes and dreams for her life and her life with Joseph. Those hopes did not include a child at this time and in this way. Accordingly, Mary's response to this unplanned pregnancy is instructive; she chose life.

But there's more, because the angel gave Mary another piece of information that was probably not known by anybody else: her cousin, Elizabeth—known to be a barren woman past childbearing years—was pregnant with a son as well. And Scripture says that, once Elizabeth conceived, she hid herself for five months. It is unlikely anyone knew that Elizabeth was pregnant, other than her husband who could not speak. The passage ends with, "nothing is impossible for God." In the very next chapter, we are told that Mary "rose up in haste" to see Elizabeth. Why would she hurry to go see her cousin? When a woman faces an unplanned pregnancy, who does she tell first? Likely somebody who can or should sympathize with her situation. Mary's miraculous unplanned pregnancy compelled her to go see Elizabeth, who was experiencing a rather miraculous pregnancy, too. Scripture tells us that Elizabeth was about six months pregnant when Mary approached her, and when Elizabeth heard the greeting from Mary, the child jumped within her. What prompted the child inside Elizabeth's womb to jump? Jesus, of course, conceived in Mary's womb. Importantly, this was probably only days or a few weeks after Christ's

conception. Remember, Mary went *in haste* to see Elizabeth.

This is significant to the life issue because Scripture tells us that both late-term abortion and early-term abortion end a human life. John the Baptist, who was in Elizabeth's womb, leaped in response to something happening outside the womb. And he was responding to a "someone," a life growing in Mary's womb.

If a Christian is uncertain about the life issue, start with the question, "When did Jesus's life begin?" Scripture makes clear when it began, but the story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth adds another finer point, affirming the presence of life in the womb in both the earliest and latest stages of pregnancy.

Importantly, none of these Scriptures mention the word "abortion," but it's clear that the principles speak to it directly.

4.) How should uncertainty about when life begins lead a Christian to view the abortion decision?

Despite the power of the above biblical arguments, I have encountered pro-choice Christians who generally agree with the arguments but retain their pro-choice position. Why? They are uncertain about when life begins. But is support for abortion a logical conclusion to draw from such uncertainty? As Christians, we can respond to this reasoning by asking, "Do you have a worldview that says that human life is precious?" As Christians, pro-life or pro-choice, we certainly have a worldview that says human life is precious. We can go a step further by asking, "Do you believe that innocent, vulnerable life is precious?" Universally, Christians all over the world should say, "Absolutely, yes." So, if one believes that life is precious, and that innocent, vulnerable life is especially precious, then the uncertainty of when life begins actually should lead to a pro-life position.

To drive this point, I often share an illustration: let's say I ask you to come to my house to help me move my belongings to a new home. When you arrive, there's a room full of boxes that need to be loaded onto the moving truck. Just as you are about to pick up your first box, I gasp, stop you, and say, "Oh my gosh, I messed up! There is a precious, priceless

Fabergé egg in one of the boxes...but I forgot to label the box.” In other words, I am uncertain about which box contains the precious item. So, as I hand you your first box, how would you treat that box? Indeed, how would you treat every box? Very carefully, I’d hope! But why? Because you do not know which box contains the precious egg, you would proceed with caution, treating every box carefully as if something precious and worth protecting could be inside. Likewise, if you don’t know when life begins and you believe that life is precious, especially vulnerable life, and you don’t know whether the contents of a woman’s womb is a life or not, then you should be pro-life, not pro-choice. You should, logically, take the more cautious approach that protects what could be precious and valuable, not the approach that could destroy it.

Conclusion

As pro-life Christians, knowing why we are pro-life is especially important when it comes to speaking with love and truth to our pro-choice brothers and sisters in Christ. These four biblical arguments present a compelling, Scripture-based case that establish the pro-life position as central to our Christian faith.

All Christians should think about the life issue primarily through the lens of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. How does a decision to have an abortion, assist someone in an abortion, or promote abortion in the public square line up with the Great Commandment and the Great Commission?

Next, all Christians should wrestle with the question of when Jesus’s human life began. Scripture is clear that His life began at conception. We can also put a finer point on this perspective by studying Mary and Elizabeth’s pregnancies, which show life at the earliest and latest stages of pregnancy.

Finally, if a Christian is still uncertain about when life begins, but believes that life is precious, then their uncertainty should lead to a pro-life perspective.