



## Sanctity of Human Life

God is not silent. He reveals Himself in the created order and speaks to us in the Bible. He reveals himself as preeminent and the creator of all things, including humanity. And as creator He has ultimate authority to govern His creation according to His wisdom and power. He commissioned our first parents to be His vice-regents in this world, spreading His order and dominion around the globe through obedience to His command to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Even after the Fall, God sovereignly ordained where and when all peoples would live, doing so in order that they should seek Him. Later, God codified a prohibition against murder in the Ten Commandments, indicating His hatred of it. And in the wisdom and power of God, the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, became a human being, taking on flesh, dwelling among us—embodying the clearest revelation of the character and nature of God that has ever been seen, and recorded for us in Scripture. The incarnation of Christ confirms the sacredness of humanity in the eyes of God and demonstrates the great love of God for us. And the reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit signals God’s acceptance of redeemed humanity, His church, as His dwelling place. So why do we affirm the sanctity of human life? We affirm this truth because God has revealed to us in the Bible that He has uniquely made us in His image to relate to Him in a special way, and considers our lives to be worthy of honor, dignity, and respect above the rest of the created order. In short, we affirm the sanctity of human life because He affirms it and commands us to do the same (*Romans 1:20, Psalm 19, Genesis 1:28, Acts 17:24-28, Exodus 20:13, John 1, Hebrews 1, John 3:16-17, Ezekiel 36:26-27, Genesis 1:27*).

God not only demands that we treat human life as sacred in our thoughts and personal behavior but that we expend our energy to save and protect that life. He requires us to show mercy to the vulnerable, the most vulnerable of which are those who have no voice, of which the most vulnerable are the unborn. The unborn are unseen, unable even to cry out in pain. The elderly and chronically ill also find themselves in difficult positions as they become more reliant on others, and face struggles with high medical costs, social marginalization, loneliness and despair, all of which make them more susceptible to exploitation and abuse. We who are able to speak are required to advocate for them, give voice to their plight and vulnerable position, and seek justice on their behalf (*Job 31:13-28, Deuteronomy 10:17-21, Isaiah 1:16-17, James 1:27, Micah 6:8, 1 John 1:17-18*).

The elders of Heritage Baptist Church believe that Scripture commands us to shepherd the flock of God among us, caring, nurturing, and loving His church by His grace, and according to His Word. To that end, we submit this paper to the church body as a summary of biblical teaching concerning the sanctity of human life. We do so for several reasons. First, the scientific advances of the last century of human history have given us formerly unseen glimpses into the human body at all its stages of development, and have increased our ability to enable, alter and extend life. Second, various groups have utilized the widening knowledge gap between the layperson and the scientist to blur the line between right and wrong, good and evil. Finally, we believe that the Word of God speaks to these issues but has often been neglected. We desire to give clarity regarding some of these matters and bring the implications of God’s Word to bear on them. From the infertile couple hoping for a child to the grief-stricken family deliberating over end-of-life decisions for a beloved parent, we are all affected. And as we stand with such weighty decisions before us, we must heed God’s instruction.

The elders are aware that some of the information herein may cause pain to the reader, either because of a new awareness of previously unrecognized sins, or because of an acknowledgment of the need to alter one’s beliefs or lifestyle in some way. We ourselves have fallen under the conviction of the Holy Spirit as a result of our investigation. We stand in condemnation over no one, instead desiring for all to live lives of holiness, repentance

and faith, trusting in the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its promised forgiveness, that we might all be more fully conformed to the image of Christ  
(1 Peter 5:1-4, 1 Timothy 4:1-3).

## Abortion

Abortion: the termination of a pregnancy after, accompanied by, resulting in, or closely followed by the death of the embryo or fetus (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/abortion>).

Embryo: a human being or animal in an early stage of development . . . in its mother's uterus . . .  
(<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/embryo>).

Since the Roe v. Wade decision by the Supreme Court on January 22, 1973, it is estimated that more than 60,000,000 unborn children have been aborted in the United States alone. This tragic sin should bring immense sorrow to the heart of the people of God. So what are the unborn? Many arguments against the full humanity of the unborn hinge on the fallacy that there is something less "human" about them. However, neither size, location, nor level of maturity diminishes the personhood of any human being. The development that occurs after conception is not a development of personhood; thus, abortion is the murder of someone made in the image of God. Scientific observation also demonstrates the humanity of the unborn. As Professor Micheline Matthews-Roth of the Harvard University Medical School notes, "It is scientifically correct to say that **an individual human life begins at conception.**" Professor Hymie Gordon of the Mayo Clinic likewise states, "By all the criteria of modern molecular biology, **life is present from the moment of conception**" (Both quoted from *Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?* by Randy Alcorn, pgs. 174, 175).

Abortion has for many years been a highly divisive political issue, around which there have been various compromises for political reasons. Among those who would typically oppose abortion one compromise has been the allowance of abortion in the case of rape or incest. However, this compromise lacks sufficient biblical or even logical justification, and punishes an innocent child for another person's crime. Any woman who is a victim of sexual assault should be loved and cherished and receive the support of God's people. In cases of rape or incest where a child is conceived, the victim should be supported during her pregnancy and after the child's birth. The Word of God makes clear and the consistent position of the church throughout time has been that an unborn child is made in God's image and fully human, and is worthy of dignity and protection, regardless of his/her manner of conception.

The elders of Heritage Baptist desire to affirm the dignity and worth of every unborn child. As such we oppose abortion of any kind. We do, however, acknowledge that there may be rare cases where in order to save a mother's life, it may be necessary to perform a medical procedure or administer drugs that result in the death of an unborn child, e.g., ectopic pregnancy, uterine cancer, among others. Such cases are not considered to be abortions since the death of the unborn child is the result of an attempt to save the mother's life.  
(<http://www.epm.org/resources/2010/Feb/20/what-about-woman-whose-life-threatened-pregnancy-o/>).

The elders of Heritage Baptist Church affirm the following Scriptural truths and have placed them in the HBC ByLaws and HBC Articles of Incorporation as follows:

We affirm the sanctity of human life because God has revealed to us in the Bible that He has uniquely made us in His image to relate to Him in a special way, and that He considers our lives to be worthy of honor, dignity, and respect above the rest of the created order. In short, we affirm the sanctity of human life because He affirms it and commands us to do the same. (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19; Genesis 1:28; Acts 17:24-28; Exodus 20:13; John 1; Hebrews 1; John 3:16-17; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Genesis 1:27)

God not only demands that we treat human life as sacred in our thoughts and personal behavior but that we



expend our energy to save and protect that life. He requires us to show mercy to the vulnerable, the most vulnerable of which are those who have no voice, of which the most vulnerable are the unborn. We believe that human life and personhood begins at conception (Psalm 51:5; Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5), and that human life is to be valued and protected, from conception until natural death. (Genesis 1:26; Proverbs 24:11-12). Because of that, we oppose abortion of any kind and at any stage of pregnancy.

We do, however, acknowledge that there may be rare cases where in order to save a mother or a child's life, it may be necessary to perform a medical procedure or administer drugs that unfortunately result in the death of either the mother or unborn child (e.g. ectopic pregnancy, uterine cancer, among others). The goal is to do everything medically possible to preserve the life of the mother and the unborn child. The death of the unborn child in these cases is not considered to be an abortion, but the unfortunate consequence of an attempt to save both lives.

