



**BRAVE CHURCH**  
TACKLING TOUGH TOPICS  
TOGETHER

**Ethics of Abortion**

# Prayer

*If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask Him and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking.*

James 1:5

Lord,  
We ask for wisdom, tolerance and empathy  
as with discuss a very difficult topic.  
Open our hearts.  
In Jesus' Name we pray.  
Amen

# Covenant Rules

## **RULE 1**

We will accept conflict and commit to the way of kindness.

## **RULE 2**

We will take responsibility for how our own words are received.

## **RULE 3**

We will ask permission before we challenge someone's views on a subject.

## **RULE 4**

We will show respect for one another and graciously receive feedback if someone feels disrespected.

## **RULE 5**

We will use 'I' instead of 'you' statements. We will not accuse or attack."

## **RULE 6**

Give everyone who wants to speak an opportunity to do so.

# Topics on Abortion

**May 10**

**Ethics of Abortion**

Facts-Biology of Fetal development

Personhood

Facts-Abortion reality today

Women's Rights

**May 17**

History & Law

What does Religion say?

Reproductive Justice

# The Questions

Is Abortion immoral?

Should abortion be illegal?

# Definitions

- ❑ Spontaneous Abortion=miscarriage
- ❑ Clinical Abortion=termination
- ❑ Moral (*moralis*-Latin)—what is right as prescribed by Religion or Society
- ❑ Ethics (*ethos*-Greek)—morals+reasoning

# Ethical Action

- conscious, self-aware and intelligent beings
- Intentionality
- what is morally good or bad in society
- Actions not the person
- Validity

# Embryology

- Trimesters or weeks
- Fertilization age versus gestational age
- Stages
  - Zygote
  - Blastocytes
  - Embryo
  - Fetus



# Embryology

## Zygote

- fertilization results in a single cell organism
- Fertilization takes about 24 hours
- Zygote has all genetic material needed

## Blastocyst

- Ball of stem cell
- Some cells become the placenta
- Implantation occurs at 1 week, complete at 2 weeks
- Morphogenesis begins in 3<sup>rd</sup> week

*Week 3 post fertilization = 5<sup>th</sup> week of Gestational Age  
Woman has now missed a menstrual period*

# Embryo

- Fertilization week 4 to 8
  - Gestational week 6 to 10
- Heart Activity detectable
- Primordial brain is beginning
- Embryo cannot be identified as human

# Fetus

## **9-12 weeks**

basic organs, limbs, 3 inches long

## **13-16 weeks**

skeleton visible and genitalia recognizable on ultrasound

kidneys make urine

## **17-20 weeks**

Hair present, Hearing, 9 inches

Quickening

## **21-25 weeks**

eye movement, fingernails. Lungs not sufficient

22 (24) weeks may survive *VIABILITY*

# Fetus

*By the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester, the fetus has coordinated movements and basic sensations. The cerebral cortex is smooth.*

## **26-29 weeks**

eye lids open, 15 inches, two & half pounds

## **30-34 weeks**

18 inches, 4 & half pounds

## **36-38 weeks (40 week gestational Age)**

20 inches, 7 & half pounds

*The Cerebral Cortex, responsible for consciousness, self-awareness, thinking and reasoning develops mostly AFTER term*

# Ethical Quandaries

Moral Status of the Fetus

**Is the fetus a Person with human rights?**

Rights of the Pregnant Woman

**Should human freedom and privacy have restrictions?**

Women in Society

**Is a worldview developed by men inherently biased?**

Relationship between fetus and pregnant Women

**How does the dependency effect the ethical relationship?**

Relationship between Moral and legal aspects of abortion

**If the fetus is killed, is the act necessarily illegal?**

# Personhood

An adult person in community has  
Inalienable Rights:  
Life, liberty and pursuit of  
happiness

# Personhood

**Human Being:** physical and biological traits of the Homo sapiens species

**Person:** consciousness, reasoning, self-aware, self-motivated activity, communication

# Is the Fetus a Person?

- Embryo is a distinct Being at implantation
- Fetus lacks mental capacity of Personhood
- Developing fetus is moving toward Personhood
- Viability
- Dependency



**BUT**

**the fetus is a  
Potential Person**

# Discussion Questions

IF the FUNCTIONS of  
Consciousness, self-awareness, ability to  
communicate, autonomy and reason  
describe Adult Human Personhood;

is there a difference between  
FUNCTIONING as a Human Person  
or BEING a Human Being?

How does this apply to a fetus---

- \*able to survive 3 months premature?
- \*with heart activity(brainstem)  
but little cerebral cortex(12weeks)?

# How Many Abortions?

Estimated 1.2 million Abortions Annually

- 6.4 million pregnancies each year
  - 3.4 million are Unintended **(50% of all pregnancies)**
  - 40 % of Unintended pregnancies result in Abortion
  
- **20 % of all pregnancies are Aborted**
  
- 20 % of all pregnancies are spontaneously aborted--miscarriage

## When do Abortions Occur?

- 1/3 by 6 weeks
- 91% in first trimester
- 8.4% second trimester
- <1% after 21 weeks
- < 0.08% after 24 weeks

# Who chooses Abortion?

## Adult Women

- 97% legal Adults
- 3% teens--15 to 17 years old
  - 0.02% children less than 15 years old

## Mothers with children

over 60% have at least one child

1/3 of **All** Women have an abortion by 45 years of age

# Why do Women choose Abortion?

- ❑ 89% of pregnant women have 2 reasons to seek abortion
  - ❑ Median --4 reason
- ❑ 75 % are poor or low income
- ❑ 74% interfere with education/job/career/raising other children/caring for a dependent
- ❑ 50% relationship issues/not want to be a single parent
- ❑ 38% completed childbearing

# Rights and Moral Obligations

- Fetal Right to Life
- Woman's Right to control her body  
and reproductive choices
- Balance between the two
- Father

# Rights

- ❑ Claim Rights create obligations on others
- ❑ Liberty Rights—privileges
  
- ❑ Source of rights
  - Natural
  - Legal
  - Contractual



# Does a Person have an absolute Right to their body?

- Part of Person's Identity

- Exceptions

  - Lacks Cognitive ability

  - Interferes with another liberty of another

# The Dilemma

❑ A woman is free to detach herself from the fetus because it is her body and her right to choose what to do with her own body. Death of the fetus is an unintentional consequence.

**OR**

❑ Since the Fetus is a person, an abortion is killing a person. A Right to Life trumps a Right to Use one's body as she wishes

# How much Sacrifice?

- ❑ Pregnancy and the birth process entails a monumental physical and psychological sacrifice. Sometimes life threatening.
- ❑ “No person is morally required to make large sacrifices to sustain the life of another who has no right to demand them...we are not required to be Very Good Samaritans to one another” Judith Jarvis Thomson

## **The pregnant woman owns the house, the fetus is a guest in the house.**

- All **Persons** have a **claim right to life**.
  - **NOT** have a claim right to **all** things necessary to sustain their own existence
- IF the Fetus is a **Person** with a **Right to Life**, that is **Not** a right to **use** another's body without their consent.

# Intent

- ❑ Burglar & an open window
- ❑ Barred window
- ❑ Air bourn seeds

# Discussion

# Questions

Are there any situations when the fetus has a RIGHT to the woman's Body

Is there a difference between KILLING the fetus and ALLOWING DEATH when the fetus is detached during an abortion?

Does the woman lose the Right to control her Body if she has unprotected Sex?

If the pregnancy is causing extreme harm to the woman or risk of death, should that change the relative Rights between fetus and woman?

# Dream a World

- Lord,
- We live in a broken and sinful world
- We pray and work for a world that is closer to what God intends for God's Creation,
  - where every child conceived is desired and every pregnancy is met with joy,
  - where every birthed child is loved and cared for and raised in a household and a community
    - that meets their physical, emotional, spiritual, and cultural needs.
  - We dream of your promised abundant life
- Amen

# References

## Books

- Bernie Cantens: A Critical Introduction to the Ethics of Abortion. 2019
- Daniel Maguire: Sacred Choices-The Right to Contraception and Abortion in Ten World Religions. 2021
- Rebecca Todd Peters: Trust Women-A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice. 2018
- Loretta J Ross & Rickie Solinger: Reproductive Justice-An Introduction. 2017
- Kira Schlesinger: Pro-Choice and Christian—Reconciling Faith, Politics and Justice. 2017

## Articles

- Presbyterian Mission Agency: “Abortion/Reproductive Choice” 2016
- Presbyterian Mission Agency: “Problem Pregnancy—When you need Wisdom”
- Judith Jarvis Thompson: “*A Defense of Abortion*”. 1971
- Michael Gazzaniga: “The Ethical Brain” New York Times June 6, 2005
- Caroline Kitchener. Washington Post-many article on current Abortion related events



# The Violinist

- You wake up in the morning and find yourself back-to-back in bed with an unconscious violinist. A famous unconscious violinist. He has been found to have a fatal kidney ailment, and the Society of Music Lovers has canvassed all the available medical records and found that you alone have the right blood type to help. They have therefore kidnapped you, and last night the violinist's circulatory system was plugged into yours, so that your kidneys can be used to extract poisons from his blood as well as your own.
- The director of the hospital now tells you, "Look, we're sorry the Society of Music Lovers did this to you — we would never have permitted it if we had known. But still, they did it, and the violinist is now plugged into you. To unplug you would be to kill him. But never mind, it's only for nine months. By then he will have recovered from his ailment, and can safely be unplugged from you

# The Violinist

- Is it morally incumbent on you to accede to this situation? No doubt it would be very nice of you if you did, a great kindness. But do you have to accede to it?
- What if it were not nine months, but nine years? Or longer still? What if the director of the hospital says. “Tough luck, I agree. but now you’ve got to stay in bed, with the violinist plugged into you, for the rest of your life. Because remember this. All persons have a right to life, and violinists are persons.
- Granted you have a right to decide what happens in and to your body, but a person’s right to life outweighs your right to decide what happens in and to your body. So, you cannot ever be unplugged from him.”
- I imagine you would regard this as outrageous, which suggests that something really is wrong with that plausible-sounding argument I mentioned a moment ago.

*Judith Jarvis Thomson*

# Moral Obligations may not require Just Actions

❑ Mother give Albert a box of chocolate. His brother Ben wants some too.

Albert refuses to share

❖ *Albert is greedy, stingy and callous but within his rights to all he candy..*

*He is **not unjust***

❑ The boys are given a box to share. Albert refuses to share the chocolates with his younger brother.

❖ *Ben has a claim right to half the chocolates so Albert is*

***acting unjustly not just selfishly***

# How Much Sacrifice?

## Minimal Sacrifice

- What if the Violinist only needs one hour?

## Mother-Child

- Is there a special relationship?

## ▪ Moral obligations

- Can one be responsible for unintended and unconsented actions?

## Minimally Decent

- Voluntary support of less fortunate