

Is Abortion Just a Choice?

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Statistics

According to the statistics, the number of reported abortions performed in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s was approximately 1.5 million annually. It has also been determined that about 10% of known abortion providers did not report.

While there has been some decrease in the number of abortions in recent years, it appears that there are then an estimated 1.7 to 1.8 million abortions committed every year in the US. Compare this to an average of just under 4 million live births every year in this county. One out of every three children conceived in this county is killed by abortion.

Embryo or Baby?

Many terms have been invented, perhaps to lessen the emotional response to the destruction of such: zygote, embryo, blastula or blastocyst, fetus, etc. The main question to consider regarding the issue of abortion is: Is an embryo or fetus just a thing or is it a real, living human being? And if it is a living human, at what point in time does it become such? When can we rightly call it a baby?

If the embryo or fetus is just a non-living thing, a cluster of inhuman cells, then destroying them for whatever purpose is of no consequence or concern. However, if indeed that embryo or fetus is a real, living human being, then we ought to think seriously about the appropriateness of doing anything that would end that life.

One woman who favors abortion said, "No one supports infanticide!" Therefore, those who advocate abortion appear to generally view that which is in the womb as something other than a baby:

- "...an embryo or pre-viable fetus."
- "...a non-sentient life incapable of thought or feeling."
- "...an unfeeling agglomeration of cells [that] is more important than a living, breathing, feeling grown woman."
- "...a clusters of cells that hasn't even developed a brain or heart."
- "...an embryo is many levels of complexity and differentiation lower than a baby."
- "Cells. Whoop dee do. Hard to get worked up over 'em. You can ask 'em questions, they won't answer, they can't talk. Like fish heads. But with no scales."
- "A fetus is a FETUS no matter what AND NOT a baby no MATTER what you say."
- "A fetus is not a human being... a fetus is nothing more then a live organism, whatever happens to it will not be known to it, a human becomes human at the first sign of its awareness to being alive, then it can be considered human, it still has a long way to be called life."

A few more quotes from those who approve of abortion:

- "A first term abortion is ending the life of non-differentiated cells which yes will possibly one day be a human being, but at this point aren't recognizably human, and undeniably not sentient. We as humans kill non-sentient life all the time. When we are ill, we take medicine that kills bacterial life. When we are hungry we eat animal or plant life. There is typically not a general problem with this type of killing, as the life we have ended is neither human nor sentient. Abortion is the same way. It is killing a non-sentient life, and is very different than Murder."

- “Most abortions occur before it's even a fetus - it's an embryo... doesn't feel pain, can't survive outside the womb, etc... So MY point is, the rights of a woman to control her reproduction and her life are far more significant than those of the developing *potential* human that she supports. It's her womb, her responsibility. No humans are being killed here. To say so is over-romanticizing a process that happens naturally, and has been happening by choice, since humans existed.”
- “Abortion is a woman’s right to choose.. unborn children have no rights, their rights are granted to them the moment they come into this world, then nobody can take that away.. and it should be that way.. a fetus should not take precedence over a full grown human being. There may be alternatives, but those alternatives represent a choice just like abortion does.“
- “The law is not here to promote ethics, it is here to protect rights. And only the born have rights.”
- “The unborn HAVE no right to live. If the woman so decides that she doesn't want to be pregnant then so be it. She is NOT required to carry to term.”
- “It is deceiving to call abortion murder! Murder is the ILLEGAL killing of a PERSON. Abortion is the legal killing of a non-person.”

While those who choose to have abortion appear to justify it by dehumanizing that which they choose to kill, those who have performed abortions often portray a different perspective:

- "It is when I am holding a plastic uterus in one hand, a suction tube in the other, moving them together in imitation of the scrubbing to come, that woman ask the most secret question. I am speaking in a matter-of-fact voice about 'the tissue' and 'the contents' when the woman suddenly catches my eye and says 'How big is the baby now?' These words suggest a quiet need for definition of the boundaries being drawn. It isn't so odd, after all, that she feels relief when I describe the growing buds bulbous shape, its miniature nature. Again, I gauge, and sometimes lie a little, weaseling around its infantile features until its clinging power slackens." --abortion worker Sallie Tisdale "We Do Abortions Here" Oct 1987 Harpers Magazine p 68
- “Every woman has these same two questions: First, ‘Is it a baby?’ ‘No,’ the counselor assures her. ‘It is a product of conception (or a blood clot, or a piece of tissue).’ How many women would have an abortion, if they told them the truth?” –Carol Everett, former owner of two clinics and director of four "A Walk Through an Abortion Clinic" by Carol Everett ALL About Issues magazine Aug-Sept 1991, p 117
- "We tried to avoid the women seeing them [the fetuses] They always wanted to know the sex, but we lied and said it was too early to tell. It's better for the women to think of the fetus as an ‘it’." –Abortion clinic worker Norma Eidelman quoted in Rachel Weeping p 34
- "Sometimes we lied. A girl might ask what her baby was like at a certain point in the pregnancy: Was it a baby yet? Even as early as 12 weeks a baby is totally formed, he has fingerprints, turns his head, fans his toes, feels pain. But we would say 'It's not a baby yet. It's just tissue, like a clot.'" --Kathy Sparks told in "The Conversion of Kathy Sparks" by Gloria Williamson, Christian Herald Jan 1986 p 28
- "I can remember...the resident doctor sitting down, putting the tube in, and removing the contents. I saw the bloody material coming down the plastic tube, and it went into a big jar. My job afterwards was to go and undo the jar, and to see what was inside. I didn't have any views on abortion; I was in a training program, and this was a brand new experience. I was going to get to see a new procedure and learn. I opened the jar and took the little piece of stocking and opened the little bag. The resident doctor said "Now put it on the blue towel and check it out. We want to see if we got it all.' I thought, "that'll be exciting-hands on experience looking at tissue.' I opened the sock up and put it on the towel, and there were parts of a person in there. I had taken anatomy, I was a medical student. I knew what I was looking at. There was a little scapula and an arm, I saw some ribs and a chest, and a little tiny head. I saw a piece of a leg, and a tiny hand and an arm, and you know, it was like somebody put a hot poker into me. I had a conscience, and it hurt. Well, I checked it out and there were two arms and two legs and one head and so forth, and I turned and said "I guess you got it all.' That was a very hard experience to go through emotionally." --Former abortionist

- "I want the general public to know what the doctors know- that this is a person, this is a baby. That this is not some kind of blob of tissue." –Dr. Anthony Levantino

God's Perspective

Several passages in Scripture show that God perceives that which is in the womb as a living human child, known and loved by Him:

- In Luke 1:36, the angel Gabriel told Mary: "And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age." Notice that she had conceived a son, not a thing, not an unfeeling cluster of inhuman, nonliving cells. In Luke 1:41, the Bible states (regarding Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist) that when Mary spoke to Elizabeth, "the baby leaped in her womb." Again, the inspired writer of Scripture declared that it was a baby, not just a thing. The word "baby" in these passages is from the Greek word *brephos*, and is used here in reference to that which is still in the womb. But the same word is also used elsewhere to in reference to newborn children (Luke 2:12, 16; 18:15; Acts 17:19), indicating a commonness between the born and the unborn.
- Isaiah 49:1, 5 (may refer to Isaiah the prophet or to Christ the Messiah) says, "The Lord called Me from the womb; from the body of My mother He named Me... the Lord, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant." Whether Christ or Isaiah, it is clear that the child in the womb is already a living human.
- In Jeremiah 1:5, the prophet was told by God: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." God knew the prophet even as he was still in the womb. Further, God already had "sanctified" Jeremiah. If Jeremiah's mother had aborted the baby, she would have killed one whom God recognized as a living soul. The Lord viewed Jeremiah as a living human being even while he was in the womb.
- Psalm 139:13-16 is one of the clearest biblical passages on this matter. David speaks of himself as a living human being, known by God, even while he still existed in his mother's womb. It likewise is interesting to note that in Psalm 51:5, David even talks about himself as a human being from the moment of conception!
- Under the old Law, Exodus 21:22-23 says, "And if men struggle with each other, and strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage [NKJV, NIV: "gives birth prematurely"], yet there is no further injury [child born alive and well], he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him; and he shall pay as the judges decide. But if there be any further injury [if the child dies], then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life." God acknowledged that the unborn are important and valuable children, just as valuable as those already born.

When Does a New Life Actually Begin?

The answer, quite simply (even scientifically), is that it begins at conception...

- When the male and female gametes join to form the zygote that eventually will grow into the fetus, it is at that very moment that the formation of a new body begins.
- Day 1 – the genetic material doubles, matching copies of the chromosomes move to opposite poles, and the cell cleaves into two daughter cells. Shortly afterwards, each of these cells divides again, forming the embryo.
- Day 2 – the embryo undergoes a process known as gastrulation in which the single-layer blastula turns into a three-layered gastrula consisting of ectoderm, mesoderm, and endoderm. Each of these layers will give rise to very specific structures. For example, the ectoderm will form the outermost layer of the skin and other structures, including the sense organs, parts of the skeleton, and the nervous system. The mesoderm will form tissues associated with support, movement, transport, reproduction, and excretion (i.e., muscle, bone, cartilage, blood, heart, blood vessels, gonads, and kidneys). The endoderm will produce structures associated with breathing and digestion (including the lungs, liver, pancreas, and other digestive glands).

- Day 3 – the embryo will have divided a total of four times, and will now consist of sixteen cells (by the end of the first month, the embryo will already consist of millions of cells).
- 18 days – the heart starts beating
- 21 days – heart pumps own blood through a separate closed circulatory system with own blood type
- 28 days – eyes, ears and respiratory system begin to form
- 42 days – brain waves recorded, skeleton complete, reflexes present
- 7 weeks – baby can suck its thumb
- 8 weeks – all body systems present; there are feet, hands, head, organs, etc. Upon close examination, fingerprints are evident. Although less than an inch long, the baby has a head with eyes and ears, a simple digestive system, kidneys, liver, a heart that beats, a bloodstream of its own, and the beginning of a brain.
- 9 weeks – baby can squint, swallow, move its tongue, make a fist
- 11 weeks – spontaneous breathing movements, has fingernails, all body systems working
- 16 weeks – genital organs clearly differentiated, grasps with hands, swims, kicks, turns, somersaults
- 18 weeks – vocal cords work; the baby can cry

Consider this statement by Paul E. Rockwell, M.D., an anesthesiologist: "Eleven years ago while giving an anesthetic for a ruptured ectopic pregnancy (at 8 weeks after conception), I was handed what I believe was the smallest living human ever seen. The embryonic sac was intact and transparent. Within the sac was a tiny human male swimming extremely vigorously in the amniotic fluid, while attached to the wall by the umbilical cord. This tiny human was perfectly developed, with long, tapering fingers, feet and toes. It was almost transparent, as regards the skin, and the delicate arteries and veins were prominent to the ends of the fingers."

Dr. Rockwell continues, "The baby was extremely alive and swam about the sac approximately one time per second, with a natural swimmer's stroke. This tiny human did not look at all like the photos and drawings and models of 'embryos' which I had seen, nor did it look like a few embryos I have been able to observe since then, obviously because this one was alive! When the sac was opened, the tiny human immediately lost his life and took on the appearance (with blunt extremities and such) of what is accepted as the appearance of an embryo at this stage of life."

The *Washington Post* of May 11, 1975 contained an "Open Letter to the Supreme Court"—signed by 209 medical doctors—which stated: "We physicians reaffirm our dedication to the awesome splendor of human life—from one-celled infant to dottering elder."

The Unborn Have Souls

In Job 3:11-16, Job was undergoing a terrible life crisis and cursed the day he was born. Job gave a list of people with whom he would have been counted if he had died at birth. Included in the list of kings, princes, and even stillborn infants are those who were lost to a miscarriage. Job put a miscarriage in the same category with other people who had died. Why? Obviously Job considered a unborn child (a fetus) as much a human being as a king, a prince, or a stillborn infant. That fetus, that child in the womb, has an eternal soul just like any child that is born nine months after conception.

Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Embryonic stem cell research is purported to be a vital advancement in the area of health and medicine. According to the National Institutes of Health (May 2000), stems cells are important in the area of medical research because they "...have the ability to divide for indefinite periods in culture and to give rise to specialized cells." There is little doubt that such research could be used to accomplish much good:

- “[There is] enormous promise of stem cells to the development of new therapies for the most devastating diseases... Some of our most serious medical conditions, such as cancer and birth defects, are due to abnormal cell specialization and cell division. A better understanding of normal cell processes will allow us to further delineate the fundamental errors that cause these often deadly illnesses.”
- “Human pluripotent [capable of giving rise to most tissues of an organism] stem cell research could also dramatically change the way we develop drugs and test them for safety. For example, new medications could be initially tested using human cell lines. Cell lines are currently used in this way (for example cancer cells). Pluripotent stem cells would allow testing in more cell types.”
- “Perhaps the most far-reaching potential application of human pluripotent stem cells is the generation of cells and tissue that could be used for so-called "cell therapies." Many diseases and disorders result from disruption of cellular function or destruction of tissues of the body. Today, donated organs and tissues are often used to replace ailing or destroyed tissue. Unfortunately, the number of people suffering from these disorders far outstrips the number of organs available for transplantation. Pluripotent stem cells, stimulated to develop into specialized cells, offer the possibility of a renewable source of replacement cells and tissue to treat a myriad of diseases, conditions, and disabilities including Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, spinal cord injury, stroke, burns, heart disease, diabetes, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. There is almost no realm of medicine that might not be touched by this innovation.”

Stem cells can be found in some types of adult tissue, but there are apparently some significant limitations to what can be accomplished with them. Researchers cite the following:

- “Stem cells from adults have not been isolated for all tissues of the body. Although many different kinds of multipotent stem cells have been identified, adult stem cells for all cell and tissue types have not yet been found in the adult human.”
- “Adult stem cells are often present in only minute quantities, are difficult to isolate and purify, and their numbers may decrease with age. For example, brain cells from adults that may be neuronal stem cells have only been obtained by removing a portion of the brain of epileptics, not a trivial procedure.”
- “Any attempt to use stem cells from a patient's own body for treatment would require that stem cells would first have to be isolated from the patient and then grown in culture in sufficient numbers to obtain adequate quantities for treatment. For some acute disorders, there may not be enough time to grow enough cells to use for treatment. In other disorders, caused by a genetic defect, the genetic error would likely be present in the patient's stem cells.”
- “Cells from such a patient may not be appropriate for transplantation. There is evidence that stem cells from adults may have not have the same capacity to proliferate as younger cells do.”
- “Adult stem cells may contain more DNA abnormalities, caused by exposure to daily living, including sunlight, toxins, and by expected errors made in DNA replication during the course of a lifetime. These potential weaknesses could limit the usefulness of adult stem cells.”

Because of such limitations, researchers have thus deemed that embryonic stem cells have much more potential and are much more valuable. But, there are some serious ethical and moral considerations to be made because these stem cells are being taken from human embryos. There are two basic sources for these embryos: (1) fetal tissue from abortions; and (2) surplus embryos that are not used during the process of in vitro fertilization. Either way, these embryos are being destroyed in order to conduct this research.

From CNN story Friday, July 27, 2001: “[President Bush said] that his decision on whether to grant federal funding for embryonic stem cell research is the most difficult choice he has to make, because of the dilemma between moral issues of creating human embryos to produce stem cells and the promise from doctors and scientists the research will save human lives.”

Therefore, as beneficial as embryonic stem cell research (and other types of research involving embryos) may be, consideration needs to be made that these embryos are actually human children being deprived of their God-given right to live. There is no denying the good that might come about as a result of such research. But must the innocent unborn be killed to benefit the born?

In Vitro Fertilization

According to the Advanced Fertility Center of Chicago, in vitro fertilization is performed as follows:

- The woman is stimulated with injected medications to develop multiple egg development. These injections continue for about 8 - 10 days.
- The eggs are then removed and fertilized in the laboratory with her partner's sperm.
- The resulting embryos are cultured in a laboratory for 2-6 days.
- The couple decides how many embryos are to be implanted into the woman's uterus. Women under the age of 35 are generally advised to use 2 or 3 embryos; 3 or 4 embryos when she is 35-39, and 4 or 5 if she is over 39 years old.
- If there are leftover embryos (of sufficient quality) beyond the number that is transferred, some may choose to have them frozen (cryopreserved) for use in a future cycle.

Some may decide to put these remaining embryos up for adoption. Apparently, however, it has been common for them to simply be discarded. The debate now is regarding the appropriateness of using such surplus embryos for the purpose of embryonic stem cell research, or even creating them solely for the purpose of such. Regardless, any embryo created that is not placed in the womb is being destroyed.

Conclusion

Remember Exodus 21:22-23: "And if men struggle with each other, and strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage [NKJV, NIV: "gives birth prematurely"], yet there is no further injury [child born alive and well], he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him; and he shall pay as the judges decide. But if there be any further injury [if the child dies], then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life." If God exacts such a punishment for the accidental death of an unborn child, what would He think today of the premeditated murder of millions of unborn infants?!

Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things that the Lord hates and considers to be abominations; one of those things mentioned is "hands that shed innocent blood." If indeed that fetus is a real human baby, then those people involved (all of them: the mother, the consenting father, the doctor, the assistants) in aborting that baby are indeed shedding innocent blood.

Proverbs 24:11-12. We know the truth concerning the evil practice of abortion. No matter how common and socially acceptable this practice may be or become, may we as Christians be committed to doing what is right and taking a stand for what is right.