

Have you heard about Tim Tebow's Super Bowl commercial? Tebow is maybe the best college football quarterback ever, and tonight he's running an ad during the Super Bowl to tell the story of how his mother struggled during her pregnancy with him. She got sick while she was pregnant, so doctors advised abortion. Against the odds, she refused the abortion and the son she had is now a Heisman Trophy winner. Planned Parenthood has submitted a sort of response in the form of an ad running on YouTube. So today is a good day to talk about the issue of abortion. I want to remind you that ... as with all these controversial issues we've been talking about ... the point is not to talk you into believing what I believe, but to challenge all of us to think biblically about the issues facing our culture. The goal is a biblical worldview.

Let's look at a brief history of the abortion debate:

- **The early church** – Some of the earliest writings of the Church fathers deal with the issue of abortion. They've debated the question of when life begins, but never the question of the morality of abortion. It has always been considered sinful by the Church.
- **Mid-1800s** – In 1869, Pope Pius IX announced that abortion at any point in pregnancy was cause for excommunication. That's when the Church began to say with authority that life begins at conception.
- Laws against abortion in the United States first appeared around **1900**.
- **1916** is the year Margaret Sanger and her sister opened the first birth control clinic in Brooklyn, New York. Sanger was the founder of Planned Parenthood.
- In **1927** Sanger helped organize the first World Population Conference in Geneva. And in 1942, Planned Parenthood Federation became an official organization.

- On January 22, **1973**, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its landmark decision in *Roe v. Wade*, recognizing the constitutional right to privacy and a woman's right to choose abortion.

Some of the issues in the debate leading up to that decision:

- ***Morality and the sanctity of human life*** – The fundamental issue has to do with the nature of life itself. Pro-life supporters believe life begins at conception and that abortion is murder. Pro-choice supporters see abortion as basically the same as any other form of birth control, and they support the right of women to make their own choices.
- ***Separation of Church and State*** – Is abortion a religious issue or a legal issue?
- ***Dangers of illegal abortions*** – Before abortion was made legal, there were countless stories of women who suffered and died from illegal abortions.
- ***Effectiveness of restrictions*** – Because abortions have always happened whether they were legal or not, many acknowledge that even if it were made illegal, people will still do what people will do.
- ***Tactics*** – This part of the debate has to do with how the two sides ... especially the radical activists on each end of the spectrum ... seek to make their points. When clinics are bombed and doctors are killed ... and when the rhetoric becomes hateful ... no one is helped.
- ***Women's Rights*** – For pro-choice activists, this is about women having the right to do with their bodies as they see fit. For pro-lifers, the issue is about making the *right* choice.

What does the Church say?

- ***Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists*** are probably the most outspoken opponents of abortion. They believe and teach that human life must be respected and protected

absolutely from the moment of conception, and that a human being has all the rights of a person even before birth, “whatever the circumstances of conception.”

- *The United Methodists* have a statement on abortion that is more liberal. It reads:

“Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion. But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother, for whom devastating damage may result from an unacceptable pregnancy. In continuity with past Christian teaching, we recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures.” The statement goes on to support the use of abortion in the case of severe deformities.

I disagree with the United Methodist statement on abortion. I believe life is sacred ... that people should not enter into that creative process outside of marriage ... and that we should receive life as a gift in whatever way it happens. I’ve counseled pregnant teens and women ... both single and married ... in crisis pregnancies. I have *never* counseled abortion, and I’ve not yet been in a situation where the mother was sorry for her choice to have her child. I have also counseled women who have had abortions and who suffer ... years later ... with guilt and shame over that choice. And I’ve counseled couples who have had a hard time loving each other because of the spiritual and emotional wounds inflicted by a past abortion. I guess I’ve never *had* to counsel the women who had no post-traumatic stress from the effects of an abortion, but I’ve counseled plenty who did.

About a year ago, I got a call from a woman asking if I could meet her immediately. When she showed up, she handed me this piece of paper. It says, “As of today, I am responsible for 18,617 abortions.” She went on to tell me that for three years, she’d been working in an abortion clinic (actually a group of clinics) ... And as of that day ... the day she walked into

Mosaic ... she was *done*. She'd had all the pain, drama and death she could take and she needed help getting out. Leaving her job at the clinic was a hard thing for her, but I think she would say it was the best thing she could have done. We got together last week so she could share her story by video with you today.

VIDEO CLIP #1

Planned Parenthood is by far the most influential voice in the pro-choice movement. While most people today associate Planned Parenthood with women's rights, most are not aware that Margaret Sanger, the founder, was actually a student of eugenics. That was a sort of popular movement back the 1920s. Eugenics is about breeding. It is the idea of controlling population by breeding *out* (and I'm quoting actually from someone Sanger followed) "the physically unfit, the materially poor, the spiritually diseased, the racially inferior and the mentally incompetent." People involved in the eugenics movement of the early 1900s, when Sanger was involved, believed these groups of "inferior" people should be controlled through segregation, sterilization, birth control and abortion. And that was at least partly Sanger's motivation for supporting contraception and eventually abortion. Today, Planned Parenthood clinics still reflect that bias. You will almost always find them (76%) located in economically depressed areas of a community ... particularly in areas where minorities live. The second largest abortion clinic in the world ... they are calling it an abortion supercenter ... will open in April in Houston, Texas ... in a neighborhood that's 85% Hispanic and African-American.

That should be a concern, especially given the soil this organization was rooted in. Let me share a few quotes with you from Margaret Sanger's own writings:

“We are failing to segregate morons who are increasing and multiplying . . . a dead weight of human waste . . .an ever-increasing spawning class of human beings who never should have been born at all.”

“We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population, and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members” – in a letter written to Dr. Clarence Gamble

“The most merciful thing that a family does to one of its infant members is to kill it.”

In 2007, Planned Parenthood was responsible for conducting more than 305,000 abortions in the U.S. . . . Government funding for Planned Parenthood in 2007 was \$350 million dollars . . . \$1100 for every abortion . . . most them poor minorities. Folks . . . around the world, we watch with horror as whole countries are devastated by ethnic cleansing. And I want to know how that is different from the foundational principles that birthed the largest abortion provider in the country. Do we have a right to write off those God saw fit to write into this world?

What does the Bible say?

- ***God creates life.*** God has allowed the killing of animals since the fall, but we’re not animals. We have God’s spiritual DNA. Genesis 1:27 says - *God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.* Life is sacred because we bear a spiritual likeness to our Daddy. And Genesis 2:7 says that - *the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.* So every human being has life because God chose to give it. And every one of us has His fingerprints all over us. Surely that’s worth more than \$335 a head.
- ***Human life is under God’s care and control.*** Psalm 139:13-16 says (read this together with me) - *You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise*

you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. The prophet Jeremiah wrote (Jeremiah 1:4-5) - *The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."* The Bible tells us God is involved in our lives from the moment he calls us into being. And God is making plans for us even before we're born.

- ***Jesus came to give abundant life.*** God is on the side of life. Jesus said (John 10:10) – *The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.* In Moses' final instructions words to the Israelites, he said : "Choose life."

So how do we best respond as followers of Jesus to this issue? Before we answer that question, I want to offer a few more thoughts from our interview. **(SHOW VIDEO #2)**

So ... how do we best respond as followers of Jesus to someone in a crisis situation?

- ***Respond biblically.*** Psalm 82:3-4 gives us a blueprint for a compassionate response. *Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.* That's a great way to respond ... care for the ones Jesus cares about. And Matthew 7:12 says - *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.* Most of us are glad someone gave us this chance at life. And as for the moms ... I believe what folks want most is not a way out, but a way through. Most people want to know they are not alone. To walk with them through the valley (not around it) is a compassionate and biblical response.

- ***Understand how God uses suffering and redeems mistakes.*** Because he does. In God's economy, nothing is wasted. I heard the most beautiful statement ever last week when I had the privilege of holding baby Kas, the infant son of Randle and Rosalyn Berlin. Kas was born with significant health issues, and they've just returned from ten weeks in Cincinnati, where Kas was born at a hospital specializing in his kind of care. Kas will require at least another month of hospitalized treatment before going home to intensive outpatient care. On Tuesday after they arrived home, we were all standing there around Kas ... tubes everywhere ... and Rosalyn was just beaming and she said, "I can't believe God trusted us enough to allow us to care for this one." And my heart melted. That's the very spirit of Romans 8:28. *In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*
- ***If you have an opinion, express it with integrity.*** Paul told the people of Galatia that (Galatians 5:14-15) - *the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.* Every time a clinic is bombed or a hate letter is sent, the enemy of God wins a point. Make sure your opinions are biblically based and constructively shared. Voice your concern at sites like manhattandeclaration.org. Give to Care Pregnancy Centers and Christian adoption services. Keep this crisis line number with you: **706-724-3733**.
- ***And if you have received or participated in an abortion (as a man or woman), the best thing you could possibly do is this: receive forgiveness and seek healing.*** It can't be easy to listen to all this if you've ever been involved with the choice to have an abortion. It may be stirring up some old feelings of guilt or grief. But the message of Jesus was made for times like this. 1 John 1:9-2:1 says - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will*

forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

The Word promises that nothing can separate us from God's love for us. So ... nothing you've done is beyond the reach of God's mercy. Nothing you've done is beyond forgiveness. Especially with issues like abortion, healing is a process. Today ... right now ... you can receive forgiveness ... the moment you ask. But beyond that ... there's healing. If that's your need this morning, I encourage you to visit our prayer room as we move into a time of response. That would be a great way to start the process. There are prayer ministers in there who have also been there and done that, and they will pray with you and talk about how to get past the shame. We'll host another abortion recovery Bible study group beginning in April, and there's also a table of information in the back for anyone who wants to learn more. As we receive communion I'll be at the cross for anyone who would like to talk.

Last week, I received a great email from someone recovering from multiple abortions. She's been in a Bible study and recovery group for a while now and she writes, "Abortion physically kills an unborn child and spiritually kills a mother. After abortion, a woman is expected to 'get on with her life'; within the confines of her own shame, guilt, anguish, depression, anger ... all prisons." And then she writes, "It's not over yet, but I'm more equipped than I've ever been to pursue my powerful enemies, which were always too strong for me, the enemies that lived right inside my own mind. God really does stoop down to make us great. There truly is healing power in the name of Jesus!"

Would those serving communion find your stations now as we move into this time of worship and response?

Jesus came for the very ones we write off. Rick Warren wrote this:

Jesus came for the chewed up, the crossed off, and the crying out,

The dropped out, edged out, fizzled out, and freaked out

The have nots and the held back, the hung over and the knocked around.

He came for the left out, the loaded down, and the looked over

The locked up, led astray, the laid off, and the let down.

He came for the messed up and the mixed up.

Jesus came for the passed over, the picked on, the put down and the pushed around

The ripped off, the run down, and the run over.

He came for people who are screwed up and shrugged off

The shut in and shut out

The smashed up and the strung out.

He came for the torn up, the thrown away, and the turned off

Those who are used up and walked over

The washed out, the worn out, and the wiped out.

The written off.

He came for you.

And me.