

# **A few thoughts on abortion**

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(First published: April 17, 2022/Last revision: December 26, 2023)

First things first, I need to point out that I'm not actually taking a position on whether you should consider abortion to be right or wrong for you in this article. As far as those of us in the church called the body of Christ go, worrying about whether something is sinful or not isn't something we're even supposed to do anyway. In fact, we aren't supposed to actively try to avoid sinning at all (to actively try to avoid sinning is what Paul referred to as "walking after the flesh," and if you aren't familiar with this scriptural truth, please read my *"How Christians walk after the flesh"* study). The truth is, all things are permitted for us, even if not all things are beneficial.<sup>1</sup> So even if something is a sin, we're technically still allowed to do it no matter what it is, even if it might still be something that would be better for us to avoid.

In addition to avoiding walking after the flesh, whatever any believer concludes about the sinfulness of an action, we aren't meant to enforce our own conclusions about what would be sinful for us to *personally* participate in on others, or to judge our brothers and sisters in Christ for whatever they might decide to do or avoid (please read all of Romans 14 for more on this particular point). Nor are we meant to get involved in politics to try to enforce our own preferences on the rest of the world (politics and moralism are the domain of the unbeliever and the religious, and are not activities those of us in the body of Christ are called to participate in). So, if you have concluded that it would be a sin for you to do so, by all means, avoid having or performing abortions. However, like all decisions about sin, this is something for each of us to consider for ourselves and ourselves alone. That said, for those who haven't decided whether abortion is something that might be best avoided or not, it's still helpful to consider the facts, which is why I've published this article.

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<sup>1</sup> All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. — 1 Corinthians 10:23

Before we get into any of the other details about the topic, however, it's important to know that, because murder is a legal term, abortion can't legitimately be defined as murder in places where it's not illegal.<sup>2</sup> Yes, abortion might involve killing, but killing can only be classified as murder if the killing is unlawful under one's human government, otherwise capital punishment and the killing of enemy combatants in war would also have to be called murder, as would killing in self defence, and so the claim of many anti-abortionists that abortion is murder (at least in most of the western world, or at least as of the time this article was first written) isn't something even worth taking into consideration. Now, some have tried to get around this fact by saying, "It doesn't matter how humans define the word. The only thing that matters is how God defines it." Well, "murder" is an English word, and like all words, if we aren't all using the same definition when we use it, the word becomes entirely meaningless as far as a discussion goes and there's no point in even using that word to begin with.

That said, even if we were going to redefine the word based on what Scripture says about the topic, something most Christians aren't aware of is that abortion isn't actually condemned, or even ever discussed, in the Bible, which means the idea that God calls it murder doesn't appear to be true anyway. Of course, most Christians believe the Bible does condemn abortion, so we should quickly take a look at the passages which they use to defend this claim:

*Thou shalt not kill. — Exodus 20:13*

That verse isn't going to work if we're going to support the death penalty and war and cops carrying guns in the line of duty, as we've already discussed.

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<sup>2</sup> Abortion Is Not Murder: <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/politics/a19748134/what-is-abortion>

Other translations render this verse along the lines of, “*You shall not murder,*” which is what the passage had to have meant because otherwise God would have been telling the Israelites to sin when He commanded them to kill various people back in “Old Testament” times, and since murder technically means “illegal killing,” if abortion is legal, again, it then can’t actually be labelled as murder.

*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. — Jeremiah 1:5*

All this verse really tells us is that God knew Jeremiah before he was born. And unless this mean we exist as spirit babies before we’re born, all it does for those of us who aren’t Mormons is explain that God foreknew Jeremiah’s existence and planned for him to become a prophet beforehand (and what God plans for will happen<sup>3</sup>).

*For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. — Psalm 139:13-16*

This passage is just more of Jeremiah 1:5, explaining God’s foreknowledge and predestination, and doesn’t mention abortion at all.

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<sup>3</sup> In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: — Ephesians 1:11

*And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. — Luke 1:39-42*

Apparently “babes” in the womb can leap when the Holy Spirit inspires them to do so, although what that has to do with abortion being wrong I’m not sure.

And with that, I’m out of passages, unless there’s been some new ones brought up that I’m unaware of since I last studied the topic. Still, at least we know that God loves children (already born or otherwise) and would never do anything to harm them:

*For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits. Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. — Genesis 7:17-23*

Huh. It seems that God Himself kills babies (and there’s no way there weren’t any pregnant women alive at the time of the flood, so fetuses too, it seems). But

that's different; God can kill whoever He wants, right? At least He'd never want humans to kill fetuses or children.

*Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys. — 1 Samuel 15:3*

Well, apparently God not only kills children, He commanded humans to kill children in the past as well (and, again, there's no way there weren't any pregnant women among that group of people, meaning He basically commanded certain pregnancies to be aborted in the past, which means abortion can't be a sin or else He'd have been commanding the Israelites to sin). So the idea that God believes all fetuses have "a right to life" and wants them all to be born just isn't a defensible claim, at least not based on the Bible, which means the idea that God calls abortion murder doesn't appear to be true anyway. And so, whatever conclusions one comes to about abortion, it seems that people will have to decide for themselves based on an entirely extrabiblical perspective (if you disagree, however, please let me know what passages I missed that prove otherwise).

Still, based on other doctrines they hold to, it's surprising that most Christians aren't the most pro-abortion group of people out there. Why? Well, most evangelicals, aside from certain Calvinists, believe in a doctrine called "the age of accountability." A child supposedly reaches the age of accountability when they are old enough to understand the difference between right and wrong and can be held accountable for their sins. Up until they reach this age, children who die apparently go to heaven (or so the doctrine goes) because they're too young to understand the consequences of, and hence be held responsible for, their actions. However, once someone reaches this age (which supposedly

varies from individual to individual) they will end up in an inescapable place called hell if they happen to pass away without first becoming a Christian.

Now, I'd estimate that 90% or more of the human population will suffer in hell without end, at least according to the traditional view that this is the fate of non-Christians who die in their sins, so if never-ending torment in hell for non-believers past the age of accountability is true then perhaps abortionists should be considered the greatest missionaries there are since they'd probably be responsible for helping more souls avoid hell than all of the missionaries alive today combined. Not only that, shouldn't those Christians who have babies be thought of as the greatest monsters there are, seeing as they're willing to risk the souls of their offspring simply to satisfy a desire (either for children, or simply for sex for those who believe that birth control is wrong)? Since there is a greater than 90% chance that your child will end up in hell if they reach the age of accountability (the odds might vary depending on where and when you happen to live, but they're still pretty grim), wouldn't you be much better off killing them before they get that old? If you believe in never-ending torment for those past this age, then would not someone like Andrea Yates, who killed her children so they would be sure to avoid such a terrible outcome,<sup>4</sup> be one of the best examples of good motherhood we have? Sure, it might be a sin to commit murder, but sins can always be forgiven while you're still alive, and her children are now guaranteed a place in heaven (or so the logic should go if these traditionalists are correct).

If a parent allowed their child to participate in any activity where their kid has a 90% or greater chance of dying, or even just getting seriously injured, one would (rightly) consider that parent to be negligent and report that parent to the child protective agencies, and yet how many Christian parents are willing to

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<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea\\_Yates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrea_Yates)

gamble their children's soul with a fate far worse, and infinitely longer, than simple death or injury?

No matter how horrible this might sound to you, I challenge you to show me where I'm wrong. I've made this challenge before and have yet to have anyone correct my logic, and I don't expect to have it happen anytime soon either.

That said, since I believe in the salvation of all mankind because of what Christ accomplished (please see my "*What the Bible really says about heaven, hell, judgement, death, sin, and salvation*" article for why I believe that), I obviously don't believe that anyone ends up suffering in hell without end, so I am not suggesting anyone actually kill their children here. I'm simply making this point to challenge yet another inconsistency in Christian ideology.

Of course, most people today also aren't aware that abortion (at least if performed during much of the first two trimesters) was not actually considered to be wrong by most Christians throughout much of history either<sup>5</sup> (at least among Christians who hold to *Sola scriptura*, and the theological perspectives of those who don't hold to *Sola scriptura* are rarely even worth considering). This doesn't necessarily matter as far as one's consideration of the morality of abortion goes, since those of us in the body of Christ don't base our theology on what Christians have historically considered to fall under the purview of "orthodoxy" or "orthopraxy" anyway (because we consider the doctrines of the Christian religion to be entirely wrong about nearly everything), but it is still useful for us to know that until relatively recently evangelicals and other

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<sup>5</sup> The Truth About Christianity And Abortion: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-truth-about-christianity-and-abortion\\_b\\_58f52ed7e4b048372700dab5](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-truth-about-christianity-and-abortion_b_58f52ed7e4b048372700dab5)



Protestants have actually been mostly okay with abortion,<sup>6</sup> and that it was only due to the machinations of certain conservatives who decided to join forces with the Roman Catholics in their fight against abortion (although it appears that even Catholic opinions on abortion have changed over the years<sup>7</sup>) in order to create the movement now known as the Religious Right so they could fight against desegregation and continue to promote racism<sup>8</sup> that nearly everyone has been swayed into incorrectly assuming abortion has always been thought to be a sin by all Christians.<sup>9</sup>

And it's also important to note that a large number of Christians who today claim the "Pro-Life" label are only actually against abortion when it comes to other people's abortions, thinking that the abortions they themselves have had are somehow okay, but that everyone else's abortions are wrong and should be illegal, basically telling us that they believe the only moral abortions are the abortions they have,<sup>10</sup> as well as that a large reason they're fighting against abortion is actually because they want to punish other women for enjoying sex, and to ensure that those women suffer long-lasting consequences for their actions (they'll argue that it's actually because they think abortion is immoral and that they believe in "the sanctity of life," but their hypocrisy, along with the way they treat those who have been born — especially in the United States,

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<sup>6</sup> How Evangelicals Decided That Life Begins at Conception: [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-dudley/how-evangelicals-decided-that-life-begins-at-conception\\_b\\_2072716.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-dudley/how-evangelicals-decided-that-life-begins-at-conception_b_2072716.html)

<sup>7</sup> The Bishops Are Wrong About Biden — and Abortion: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/27/opinion/biden-bishops-communion-abortion.html>

<sup>8</sup> The Real Origins of the Religious Right: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133>

<sup>9</sup> The 'Biblical View' That's Younger Than The Happy Meal: <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/slacktivist/2012/02/18/the-biblical-view-thats-younger-than-the-happy-meal>

<sup>10</sup> "The Only Moral Abortion is My Abortion": <https://joycearthur.com/abortion/the-only-moral-abortion-is-my-abortion>

where religious conservatives only care about the unborn until they are born, after which it's up to those who are born to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, as far as they're concerned — reveals the real truth about them to the rest of us: that they don't actually believe in "the sanctity of life," or in ethical practices at all, for that matter). In fact, this quote by Dave Barnhart, a traditional Christian pastor, explains the real reason most conservative politicians and religious leaders fight against abortion:

*“The unborn’ are a convenient group of people to advocate for. They never make demands of you; they are morally uncomplicated, unlike the incarcerated, addicted, or the chronically poor; they don’t resent your condescension or complain that you are not politically correct; unlike widows, they don’t ask you to question patriarchy; unlike orphans, they don’t need money, education, or childcare; unlike aliens, they don’t bring all that racial, cultural, and religious baggage that you dislike; they allow you to feel good about yourself without any work at creating or maintaining relationships; and when they are born, you can forget about them, because they cease to be unborn. It’s almost as if, by being born, they have died to you. You can love the unborn and advocate for them without substantially challenging your own wealth, power, or privilege, without reimagining social structures, apologizing, or making reparations to anyone. They are, in short, the perfect people to love if you want to claim you love Jesus but actually dislike people who breathe. Prisoners? Immigrants? The sick? The poor? Widows? Orphans? All the groups that are specifically mentioned in the Bible? They all get thrown under the bus for the unborn.”*

But what are the scientific facts when it comes to abortion? Well, from what I've been able to determine, the brain physically cannot have a consciousness until at least 24 weeks of gestation have passed (and likely more; maybe much more<sup>11</sup>)

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<sup>11</sup> When Does Consciousness Arise in Human Babies?: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/when-does-consciousness-arise>

because it does not have the structures necessary to develop consciousness or sentience (at least based on what I could find when researching for this article). Therefore, since only about 1% of abortions take place after the 21st week, abortion in the overwhelming majority of cases doesn't seem to be the killing of a person. It might kill something that could technically be called *biologically* human (or at least something with human DNA), but it doesn't appear to be killing a conscious being with "personhood." (In addition, scientists believe that it takes even longer than that — not until at least the 29th week — before a fetus could feel pain,<sup>12</sup> in case that's a concern you might have.)

It's also important to note that abortions in the third trimester basically only ever take place because something has gone horribly wrong and the baby is going to die anyway (often in an extremely painful manner), and many times because the pregnant mother will jeopardize her health (and even her life) if she continues with the pregnancy as well. No woman goes through months of pregnancy only to abort it near the end unless something is very wrong, and it's almost certain that no doctor would do so for any other reason either, so these are all facts to keep in mind whenever someone insists that abortion is definitely wrong.

Now, some like to argue that a fetus has soul, and that killing a "living soul" would be wrong. Well, whether or not fetuses have souls, killing someone or something that has a soul isn't necessarily wrong anyway. We kill animals for food (and animals obviously have souls, which is a fact the Bible clearly agrees with as well, I might add, since the word translated as "life" in Genesis 1:30 is the same Hebrew word — נֶפֶשׁ/"nepeš" — which is translated as "soul" in other

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<sup>12</sup> 7 persistent claims about abortion, fact-checked: <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/06/1096676197/7-persistent-claims-about-abortion-fact-checked>

passages<sup>13</sup>), and God commanded the killing of lots of people in Bible times, as we've already discussed, not to mention killed plenty of them Himself, so killing "living souls" is obviously not something God forbids, nor considers to be inherently wrong, so even if fetuses actually were "living souls," it wouldn't necessarily even matter.

All that said, I'm still not here to tell you that you should (or should not) have or perform abortions. This is a very personal matter, and one that people have very strong feelings about. The only thing I'm here to do is to remind you that, regardless of the conclusions you've come to as far as the sinfulness of abortion would be for you, if you're in the body of Christ, you are not called to condemn the rest of the world for what they do, or to try to influence it to straighten up their walk. All you're called to do is walk after the Spirit, and let the rest of the world make their own decisions about morality.

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<sup>13</sup> And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. — Genesis 1:30