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## Is Abortion Just a Culture-War Issue, Not a Biblical One?

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### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to respond to the pro-choice objections that unborn babies have no rights, that abortion is not a black or white issue, that other people having abortions won't affect your life personally, and that abortion is a culture-war issue, not a biblical one.

\* How would you respond to the pro-choice objections that unborn babies have no rights, that abortion is not a black or white issue, and other people having abortions won't affect my life personally?

\* Is abortion a culture-war issue, not a biblical one?

### Transcript

(upbeat music) (dinging) You're listening to "Stand to Reasons" hashtag #STRSQPodcast with Amy Hall and Greg Cogle. Good morning, Greg. You're awfully quiet right there.

- Oh, just wait, I want to show what you're gonna say. Good morning, Amy. - All right, here's a question from Nicole.

These questions are about abortion. I had a Christian say to me, they believe that babies have no rights, that abortion is not a black or white issue. Also asked me how abortion affected my life personally.

I'm stuck, please help. - Okay, right, some notes down here. Babies have no rights.

Is that's it, the way she put it? - Yeah. - It could be that her friend has said unborn babies, but she just has a short version. - Well, let's just take it charitably.

She means unborn babies. If she believes babies have no rights, that's a whole different kind of problem. It's not a black and white issue and her personal experience, right? - She asked how abortion affects her life personally.

I guess you don't have a say if it's not affecting your life personally. That's how I'm

taking that part of the question. - All right, well, let me take this in reverse order here.

Just first of all, abortion affects the lives of all kinds of people who didn't have the abortion. All right, it affects the father, the parents, the grandparents, and the uncles. Oh, no, it doesn't, yes, it does.

There's a whole ministry, by the way. And I interviewed the young lady who is responsible. I can't remember the name of this ministry, but it is all about seeking to bring healing to those people who have been wounded by abortion and not just the women who had the abortion, but all the rest of the people in the family that were hurt as a result of it.

Okay? And so the damage is much more expansive. But think of this. Think of a woman who has multiple abortions and then gets married.

And whatever subsequent impact of the multiple abortions that were in her life are actually having an impact on her relationship with her husband. Okay, that happens too. So this is something that people don't think about.

And I'm not making this up, all right? So that's the first thing about the experience. And second thing about the experience is if we're taking this, well, you can't have an abortion, so you have nothing to say about it. My response is, what would you say if I was beating my wife? Well, I think that would be wrong, but you're not married to her.

You're not my wife. You have nothing to do with our family. Why would you have grounds to object? Because the answer is, what you're doing to that other human being is not right.

Regardless of whether anybody else is associated with that relationship, it's still not right. And we can object on moral grounds with this, the pro-life view. If abortion takes the life of an innocent human being, it doesn't matter who, what gender you are, what sex you are.

It's an objection based on the nature of the action. Okay, and that is one of the shallowest objections going. But for some reason, this seems important to people.

Every person on the Supreme Court that approved Roe v. Wade was a male. Every one of them, all nine. Okay, that doesn't seem to bother women who raised this concern.

Okay, so in a sense, it's a kind of a sloppy straw man because they're mischaracterizing what our view actually entails. Our view is that a human being is being brutally murdered. I mean, to use the most graphic language.

And it doesn't, another human being can object to that happening regardless of their social standing, regardless of their gender or their sex, regardless of anything, because

the objection goes to the action and is unrelated to the source of the objection. That's another fallacy called the genetic fallacy. Okay, that's there.

It's not black and white. Really, in what sense, biblically is this not black and white? In state streets, Marts, I have a very particular argument from the Bible, Luke chapter one, that is very clear from God's perspective that the unborn is just as fully himself, the same individual as the one born. Okay, and therefore taking the life of one born is a violation of the sixth commandment, that is murder and taking the life before is violation of the sixth commandment.

What's not black and white about that? I don't even understand that the, now there might be extenuating, you might say, well, what up with the mother's life is involved in, okay, well then what you do is you take the standard and then you adjust it if it's appropriate for this unique circumstance. All right, so the Bible teaches against lying, but there are some cases when lying is the greater good. We see that would rehab the art, right? But that doesn't take away from the general rule of the commandment, don't bear false witness or whatever, don't lie, don't be, that's still in place.

Even if there are some circumstances where a greater good will trump that lesser command. All right, so I, but that's just moral thinking, moral reasoning, it isn't that the rule about lying is not black or white, it's pretty straightforward. Even though there might be an exception.

So I, again, that makes no sense to me. These last two responses that were given are the responses of people who have no argument. All they have is, in this, this may be an uncharitable way of putting it.

I'm just reading of what it seems like to me. I'm not trying to read it in the darkest way possible. There's no argument there.

There is just some things thrown up to make, to sanitize the commitment to abortion rights. Okay, so now you're back to, well, the, the unborn has no rights. Okay, well, that, that, that's an assertion.

Our view is the unborn have rights because humans, not why humans in the capacity of being a human has rights. We hold these view, these, these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and their men means human, that each is endowed by his creator with certain unalienable rights. So the rights that we have are given by God.

Okay, now the question is from God's perspective, who is human? Well, anyone who's human doesn't matter where they're located or how old they are. And to just say, well, the unborn have no rights. If that's what she meant when she said babies have no rights, it's just a bald assertion that needs to be substantiated.

Why does this human being not have a right when another human being may be just a

little bit older and in a different location outside of the womb rather than inside of the womb have a whole array of rights that needs to be answered. To say that babies, unborn babies have no rights that is just maybe to assert some feature of the pro-life view. It isn't to defend, I'm sorry, the pro-abortion view.

It isn't to defend it. Okay, why would you say that this human being, and that's a matter of fact, this separate human being that is naturally growing inside of the mother who's producing her, this human being has no rights of any kind. And by the way, my body, my choice, that is a position that people hold, but if that has no rights, it has no rights.

So if a mother who is white is married to a black man, and she realizes that her child is going to be more black-looking than white-looking than on this view, she could abort that child. Or if a family does not want any girls, every single child that they conceive who is female, they can just abort because they're female. Or if there was a gay gene, there is none, but if there were, and we could find that in advance, then we should be able to abort that gay kid before they're born.

They do this already with Down syndrome, why not with gay people? Now I'm using these radical examples to show, 'cause I think people are gonna say, wait a minute. I don't agree with that. Well, if your view is my body, my choice, and you are asserting this radical autonomy in light of the fact that the unborn child has no rights at all, then there's no justification for any abortion of any kind is ever needed.

That's what you get, if that's your view. I don't know, those things seem like, wait a minute, that doesn't seem quite right. Well then, the unrestricted abortion view is not right.

Craig, you covered this so well already. I don't have much to add except to say that, obviously, the question of whether something affects your life personally is irrelevant. You wouldn't say that to the slave owners.

It's not affecting your life personally. 14-agers. Yeah.

Come on. So therefore you can say nothing. So I think that's really easy to dispense with.

One thing I would say, well, just to finish that off, the question of what's right or wrong is right or wrong regardless of whether it affects one specific person. And so we can obviously speak to that. But leaving that aside for a minute, this whole thing affects the way our entire culture views human beings and views human rights.

Because what we have here is a disagreement on what rights are and who has them. So our rights and value things that we earn because of certain things about us, or our rights and value the things that we have just because we're human beings. Intrinsic.

Right. And so this is a distinction that I think you should help her to understand because

there is a lot of danger in deciding, hey, we're just gonna think, and by the way, it's against the Declaration of Independence also to say that we earn our rights in certain ways. If it is the case that there are arbitrary qualities that as a society, we decide give a person rights.

Well, now you are rejecting universal human rights. And good luck to you because whoever's in power gets to decide who has rights and who doesn't have rights. Exactly.

So that is a really dangerous road to go down and it's never ended up well in the past in history. If we're going to stick with the idea of universal human rights and intrinsic human value, that includes if you're small, if you're in the womb, if you're not able to do certain things yet, but if you're a human being, then those rights apply to you. And so that's how you can make that kind of argument for her and help her to understand the difference of what we're talking about here.

And just saying that all of these issues that we've just discussed are actually developed authorily in street smarts under the two chapters we have regarding abortion. And there are questions that can be asked and dialogues that represent the kind of cascading effect of the questions, Columbus style that can use to make these points. These are really critical issues.

And it's kind of ironic after Roe v. Wade was struck down that there has been so much more emphasis on this whole issue the women's right, women's right to choose. And I'm telling you almost nobody believed that this was some kind of sacrosanct right to choose. And it's interesting that they don't have any object there to choose what, because once you say choose abortion, which is what they mean, then you have to ask them, what is abortion and what does it do? And then you get a real close picture, oh, you want a woman to have a right to do that, you know, kind of thing, then it changed, it doesn't look so sanitized.

But after 50 years almost, no, make that, yeah, almost 50 years, Roe v. Wade was 73, almost 50 years of the law telling women that they have a sacrosanct right to this no matter, it's it. You have a right to do what you want with your own body and the privacy of your own choice with your doctor. Okay, well, now it's very hard.

People have absorbed that and they think it's, this is a metaphysical truth. When the metaphysical truth is, they'll shall not murder. That's the metaphysical truth, the transcendent moral restraint or restriction.

And then the question becomes where, what are genuine examples of such murder? And clearly this is one of them. And you can argue biologically, you could argue philosophically, you could argue ethically, you can argue biblically, you end up always landing on the same spot, the same right. So following on that, Greg, here's a question from Richard and it's rather long and I'm, I'm breaking a rule to do this.

Not 200 words, so whatever, 200 letters. I want to include the explanation he has here, but he does sum it up really well in the last sentence. Okay.

But I just wanted to give a little background. Okay, he says, I have been challenged, the Bible does not place unborn children under the protection of the six commandment. That abortion is an issue on which the Bible is silent in spite of the fact that the procedure was controversial in ancient Near East, that many conservative Protestant denominations were pro-choice, both prior to and after Roe v. Wade and that the religious right was born in American politics and consequence of a quest for political influence after pro-choice politicians were defeated in the 1978 US midterm elections.

Okay. In summation, I have been challenged that abortion is a culture war issue, not a biblical one. All right.

Boy, I got a lot to say about this. First of all, it does not matter what Christian, conservative Christian denominations believed or did believe. It does not matter.

All kinds of denominations believe all kinds of different things. And when they believe things in opposition, somebody is mistaken biblically. So to say, well, a bunch of conservative denominations don't hold this.

I guess the implication is, therefore this is a legitimate biblical alternative. All right. I've been around the block for 50 years with Christian organizations and churches and conservative groups.

And well, even, you know, I'm not even sure how we had characterized conservative Christian denominations, but I've seen all kinds of ways that they have adopted cultural beliefs and kind of found ways to work them into their theology. Okay. So all I'm saying is simply because they believe that does not mean that this is not a black or white issue.

And I think that's the implication of that, that there are conservative Christian denominations that are pro-choice, okay. That this is a political issue that came into play during a specific period of time and has become a function of the culture wars. This is irrelevant.

This is a genetic fallacy. It does not matter the dynamic in the culture that launched this, okay. As C.S. Lewis has pointed out in his essay called "Bolverism," you first have to show that a person is mistaken before it's meaningful to show why he's mistaken.

Here it presumes that they're mistaken because their political ramifications to this, there's a culture war element to this. One could easily have made this same argument about William Wilberforce in the early 19th century as he campaigned vigorously and tremendously against the tide for the abolition of slavery in the, in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. That was a political, he was an MP for goodness sake, a member of Parliament.

It was a political issue and it was a cultural issue as well. You could call it culture wars if you want. That did not alter the legitimacy of his argument and to just simply say, oh, well, that's a bunch of, that's a narrow group of Christians that are trying to work to get power to have their view enforced.

This is culture war is irrelevant, though that could have been characterized that way. One has to look at the issue itself and the reasons for it, not at whose promoting it and why they might be promoting it or what place it plays in the culture of dynamic. And this is what we're doing.

And let's see. Now I'm taking these things kind of reverse, but I tried to write some of this down. How did Richard start? - That the Bible does not place unborn children under the protection of the sickest.

- There you go. Okay, so really, where does it not place unborn children? It says there that thou shalt not murder, okay? And it tells why that is the case not in the law, but in Genesis nine, verse six. If man sheds blood, man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God, God created man.

Okay, so the question is that the thing that makes capital punishment appropriate for murderers is because they took an image bearer's life. That's the criterion. I mean, that's the issue.

The question then becomes, in God's eyes is an unborn an image bearer in the same sense that a postborn is an image bearer and that postborn clearly falling under the six commandment. You were gonna jump in. - Yeah, my guess is that he's referring to the passage about when somebody hurts a pregnant woman and the baby comes out, then if there's damage, then it's life for life, tooth for tooth, eye for eye, that sort of thing.

- Right, and this is a whole-- - Well, I wrote a whole piece about this, and it's online somewhere, what exodus such-and-so. - It's like 20 or 21 again. - Really says.

- And I went very carefully through all of that, and you use the proper language when the baby comes out. And some translate when there's a miscarriage, okay? So it's not a miscarriage, it's when the baby comes out. It's only a miscarriage if the baby dies.

- And then it says life for life. - Well, then it says, if there is no damage, then there's a fine. That is no damage to the baby.

And if there is further damage, then it shall be life for life. And so there's a passage in the law, and when you do the exegetical work, it's very clear what's going on there. And I'm just saying right now that Dennis Prager did not agree with this passage, he thought this meant something else, and who's our friend in Arizona? I mean, not our friend, but the theologian who wrote the, I always have a hard time member's name, the Reformed theologian who wrote the dogmatic theology or whatever it is.

- Yeah, what? - Gerudem? - Yeah, Wayne Gerudem, thank you, sorry, Wayne. Wayne Gerudem was on the air with Dennis and walked him through this passage. And Wayne Gerudem knows the Hebrew as much as Dennis does, and he made it clear, and Dennis said, "Oh, MG, I've had it wrong.

"I now believe what you believe." Because it does make the case that the unborn, if there's a premature birth and the unborn dies, then it is life for life, okay? That is treating the unborn there in the law as an image bearer in the same sense as anyone else, okay? So, I mean, you might wanna say, oh no, it's not unborn, it is born by that time. It's out now, and so now it out, it's out and dies, then there's, yeah, that's nonsense. That's just a change of location.

We are talking about something metaphysical here. We're talking about what that individual is, is that individual, a human being, hands down, yes, that's biology, made in the image of God. Now, it's a theological notion, but one would have to argue that the unborn only takes on the image of God when it passes down the birth canal.

I have never heard anybody argue that, and I think for good reason, it's silly. You don't have a metaphysical change of being when there is a change of location. No duh, okay? So, so we're, we've given a passage in the Old Testament, but the strongest cases in Luke, chapter one, where Mary greets Elizabeth, Elizabeth is in her second trimester, the prophecy has been that the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah would be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb, right? And when she hears the voice of Mary, who is just been pregnant with Jesus, the baby leaps in her womb, that's what the text says, by the way, the baby, leaps in her womb with joy, and then she says, how is it that the mother of my Lord? Notice that Elizabeth identifies Mary as the mother of the Lord, not the one who will be the mother of the Lord.

How is it that mother of the Lord would come to see me for the moment I heard your voice, the baby leaped left in my womb with joy. So what we have is a second semester fetus and a first semester trimester fetus and a first trimester embryo or zygote. And the first is filled with this, is a baby filled with the Holy Spirit because that baby is John the Baptist, even though he's not named until after he's born.

He is, you know, rigidly designated to use philosophic terms and that zygote or embryo is the Lord, which is why the fetus John in the fetal stage leapt with joy to be in the presence of the Lord, who is Jesus in the embryonic stage. In other words, they were themselves, even while they were developing in their mother's womb, and themselves were John and Jesus, who humanly were made in the image of God. Now, I honestly don't know how any fair minded person reading that passage could see otherwise.

That means even John and Jesus before they were born would have fallen under the protection of the Sixth Commandment. - All right, Greg, there's just one last thing I wanna say about this, and that's this last statement about abortion being a culture war



issue, not a biblical one. I think what I would ask is, what do you mean by a culture war issue? Because it seems to me, this is just a way of dismissing all the arguments, and I don't even know what it means.

What does it mean to be a cultural war issue and not a biblical one? Are you saying that there aren't real reasons for it? Are you saying that it's all about power? What are you saying exactly? Are you just using a word to dismiss all of the moral arguments that are being made? And that seems completely illegitimate to me. And by the way, even if it were a culture war, and I think that is a dismissive way of putting it, you're absolutely right, we have been involved in a culture war for 2,000 years, a re-defusion six. There's certainly a spiritual element to that, but there is conflict between Christianity and the world.

And like I said, one could easily dismiss Wilberforce's efforts in the same way, but that doesn't mean they weren't legitimate efforts for him as a Christian, follower of Christ in the culture doing good and reforming it for the good, which was one of his chief goals, the Reformation, stop the slave trade and what he called a Reformation of morals, and that is to stop a whole bunch of things that were bad in the culture and redeem them for Christ's sake. - Well, the reason why our culture is divided over things and fighting over things is because we have genuinely held beliefs about the nature of reality, the nature of morality, foundational worldview issues. This is a legitimate conversation to have.

It's not just a thing of, it's not just about power. And if you're gonna say it's just about power, then you have to say both sides are about power, and I'm sure he's not willing to say that. So if they're gonna admit that one side has genuine beliefs about this, then they should be able to admit that the other side also has genuine ideas about this.

And therefore, to address this, you have to address the ideas. You can't just dismiss it as being a quest for power or whatever it is so you can avoid responding. - Yeah, and it sounded like too, this culture war started because of Roe v. Wade.

Well, yeah, it's the other side shut first, fired the first shot, you know, and it was a big one. Well, okay, we're canceling out all these kids born that are before their rights and everything right here, Roe v. Wade, that was an act of judicial tyranny. And that finally got corrected 50 years later, 60 million plus children later, 60 million, that's how many died in the Second World War.

I mean, everybody allied access and all the civilians. That was the cost. Okay, so that organized Christianity would rise up against that and say we are standing against it.

That would be entirely appropriate, even if there were excesses in the movement, whatever, I'm not defending all that. But if you wanna call that a culture war, and I think you're right, I think this is dismissive, well, it's clearly dismissive. It's just a culture war thing, a power, a political kind of move.

Well, that's because it started in politics and political policy has ramifications for human lives. And there are evil policies that need to be opposed to well-reformed again, for example, and even in our own country. So yeah, I think that's a good insight, Amy.

- Well, thank you, Nicole and Richard. We appreciate hearing from you. Send us your question on Twitter with the hashtag #strask or you can go through our website at str.org. And we'd love to hear your question.

All right, thanks for listening. This is Amy Hall and Greg Cogle for Stand to Reason. (bell dings)

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