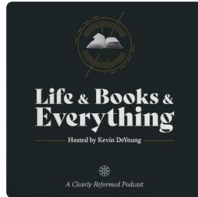


# OpenTheo

## The Biblical View of Abortion with Tom Pennington

May 5, 2025



### Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

What does the Bible say about life in the womb? When does life begin? What about personhood? What has the church taught about abortion over the centuries? How should we respond to familiar slogans like “My body, my choice”? In this important episode, Kevin talks with Tom Pennington, Pastor at Countryside Bible Church in Southlake, Texas, about his new book *The Biblical View of Abortion: God’s Heart for Life in the Womb*. Listen in as Tom and Kevin try to equip Christians to defend life and love the unborn, just like God does.

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## BOOKS & EVERYTHING

The Biblical View of Abortion: God's Heart for Life in the Womb by Tom Pennington

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## Transcript

This episode of Life and Books and Everything is brought to you by Crossway, publisher of a new book by Kayla Morrell, a light on the hill, the surprising story of how a local church in the nation's capital influenced evangelicalism. This is a biography of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, known to many people because Mark Deaver has been ministering there for decades, but it has a much longer story. I love biographies of churches or ecclesiographies, and Caleb is very sharp, it's well researched, it's well written, and whether you know much about CHBC or not, I'm not a Baptist, but I am thankful for this church and love the work that Caleb has done to present this story to us.

So check this out, a light on the hill. We also want to thank our friends at Desiree and God for supporting the podcast. You can join John Piper and other DG teachers on June 6 for an evening of teaching and worship.

John is preparing a live look at the book session. Tony Ranky, David Mathis, DG CEO Marshall Siegel will join him and teach around the topic. You still want to be happy, what it means to desire God.

So this is a live event, you can get online, space is limited, go to [desiringgod.org/slash/be-happy](http://desiringgod.org/slash/be-happy). Greetings and salutations, my name is Kevin DeYoung, senior pastor at Christ Kevin Church in Matthews, North Carolina, just outside of Charlotte, and I am joined today with my special guest, Tom Pennington, and we are talking about Tom's new book, *The Biblical View of Abortion, God's Heart for Life in the womb*. It is a little bit, Tom and I were just saying, I don't think we've met before, but we have lots of mutual friends.

Tom has been the pastor teacher at Countryside Bible Church in South Lake, Texas. That's Dallas area, right? Right. Got my geography for over 20 years before that served in various roles at Grace Community Church, including working at Grace as senior associate pastor, personal assistant.

So he's been very close, worked closely with John MacArthur and master's seminary, Grace to you. Tom, welcome to LBE. Thank you for writing the book and thank you for talking to us about it.

Well, thank you, Kevin. Appreciate it. Appreciate your heart for this issue as well.

So I just gave the back of the book blurb kind of information, but tell us a little bit more about yourself, where you're from, and what you've done in ministry, and then why you wrote this book? All right. Well, yeah, I am from Mobile, Alabama originally, and kind of like your family from a large family. I'm the youngest of 10 children.

Yeah, I read that and I made a note of that. We only have nine, so we're quitters. Well, you've got time yet.

My mom was 46 when I was born, so you've got time. All right. I'll tell my wife that she turns 45 this week.

All right. But I grew up there, became a believer as a senior in high school. My dad was a music director in a Southern Baptist Church.

And just developed a heart and a love for the Word of God, eventually called into ministry, went to seminary, and then in 87 moved out to California because I didn't feel like in the churches I'd been a part of. I'd really seen a New Testament church lived out and I developed a real appreciation for John MacArthur. So my wife and I picked up moved out thinking we'd be there a couple of years and then go pastor and the Lord had other plans ended up there.

16 years served as the managing director of grace to you. And then the last four years at the church as John's assistant and as the senior associate pastor. And then came here from there 21 years ago in October of 2003.

And it's been a great joy, a great journey. It's been a 20 year honeymoon. You know, the typical problems in the church, but just a joy to be here and serve among these people.

So when you worked at Grace to you, you know, hear all these stories, you were just, this was maybe before your time. I don't know the chronology stuffing tapes and sending them off to people. What was it like when you started and it must be pretty amazing and gratifying to see what it's become? Oh, it's it's incredible.

Yeah, when I started, it was still tapes. In fact, we had a tape, tape lending library. Wow.

We didn't have CDs at the time. They hadn't come along. So just tapes and books and booklets.

I actually started as a study guide editor. Those who listened to Grace to you back in the day will remember they used to give with the radio broadcast. You could, you could order a little printed copy of the sermon sort of edited.

And that's how I started at Grace to you and eventually had other roles. But yeah, it's amazing to see what the Lord's done. And tell us a little bit about the church in South Lake.

I love to hear that. It is, we hear a lot of really hard stories and that's very true in Pastor Ministry too. But it also can be and I think more often than we realize is the case.

You have the normal hardships. People hurt you. We make mistakes as pastors.

There's conflicts, staff situations. But it really can be the greatest job on Earth. So let's talk about your 20 plus years there and tell us about your church and brag on your people a little bit.

Well, you know, when I came, it's really a story of two churches because when I came, it's the first description you had, you know, very difficult, hard. The church had been through a split. Some number of issues had gone on.

A lot of people had left. There was blood everywhere in terms of family split and all of those things. But you know, I just settled in and I was encouraged by those in my life to say, look, you just preach God's word faithfully.

You love God's people and over time those hurts will heal and the church will prosper. And we just have seen that over 21 years now. It's such a joy.

And I know for all those who pastor, you know what it's like to stay in one place long enough to see the next generation. Those who were kids when you came now in ministry leadership and to look around on a Sunday morning and see stories of grace just everywhere. You know, lives

were deemed marriages saved.

Just, you know, the power of God spirit in his word. It's a thrilling thing to participate in that. That's great.

You know, it's been a great 21 years. As you said, not without its hardships and troubles along the way. That's life in the fallen world.

But so much joy that I just can't even, I can't measure the difficulties against the joys. Yeah, that's great. I really want, especially young pastors might be listening to this to hear it.

You need to go in with eyes wide open for the pains and the difficulties. And yet we don't want to create this picture. Sign up for pastoral ministry.

Somebody's got to do it. Somebody has to be willing to just have unremitting suffering in their life. You are opening yourself by God's grace to some of the sweetest joys that God can give and it's a privilege to be a pastor.

So I love your heart in that. Tell us about this book. We're talking about Tom Pennington's new book, *The Biblical View of Abortion*.

What's really, there's a lot of things really, really good about this. It's very well organized. And I encourage all of our listeners, anybody watching this to get this book, it's published by The Word Unleashed.

And Tom is a very clear thinker. It's organized. The chapters are organized usually with, here's three reasons for this, four reasons for that.

I'm guessing that maybe this started with some teaching series at your church. Tell us how it came about and why you saw the need for this book now. Yeah, well, I mean, like yourself, my ministry weekend and week out is the consecutive exposition of God's Word.

But from time to time, for the sake of my congregation, for my own sake, to wrestle with the issues, I step away from that and take a look at issues. The motivation for this book really came out of the June 2022 decision by the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. And, of course, everybody was talking about this issue.

Of course, the people in our churches embrace, or most of them anyway, embrace the fact that the Bible is opposed to abortion. But I don't think many of them understand really why. And so just in a desire to shepherd my own congregation and to make sure we were all clear, out of that was born a couple of sermons, just a brief two sermon series.

And that was the framework for the book. I mean, the organization structure that you mentioned really is the structure of the messages that I preached. And then just worked at filling out some of the details that there's not time to do into 45 minute messages.

Now, since you've done the research and there's a lot of research that went into this book, and I know you may not have all the numbers off the top of your head, but can you give us a sense. What's the lay of the land since the overturning of Roe v. Wade? I mean, that was such a prayer point and so many of us rejoiced at that. And then we've had to gather our breath and look around and say, wow, the pro-life cause at least on a political level with direct legislation has suffered a lot of defeats.

At the same time, a number of states have passed, you have some lists here of heartbeat bills. What's your sense? Are things, what's better since the Dobbs decision and where have there been setbacks we need to be aware of? You know, I'd like to say that there have been some real positive trends. Honestly, they're hard to find.

I mean, just starting with statistics, you're still looking at about 2,500 abortions a day in the U.S., almost a million a year. The numbers haven't gone down. Instead, they've continued to inch upward.

And of course, across the world, it's even a greater problem. A million here in the U.S. a year, approximately, but 73 million across the world. We've exported this in a huge way.

And as we tend to be as a national leader in many ways, sometimes not in good ways. So the statistics don't bear out an improvement since Roe v. Wade. And I would also say that even politically, we've noted over the last year that the conservative party in our country has begun to step away a little bit from making that a real issue.

And I suspect, we'll see what happens, but I suspect when the next presidential election rolls around, it'll be even less of an issue. Yeah, that was disappointing to see in the Republican platform, which has been the conservative party and strongly pro-life. Now, we can hope, and some people within the administration would say, well, inside, they're still going to make good appointments in the policies that they're going to do.

Because if both of our parties have lots of problems, for sure, but at least to have one party that has stood very clearly for decades on this issue has been really, really important. And one of the things that's so good about your book, Tom, is that you set out, very calmly, not with your hair on fire, but also not mealy mouth, trying to persuade. One of my frustrations in this debate just nationally is it seems like there's very little effort to persuade.

Even the people that agree with us or politicians that would support this, it's so often just quick sound bites and often allowing the pro-abortion side to dictate the terms of the debate. Why do you think, and do you have any ideas on how we can just be better persuaders on this issue? Because yes, we need legislation, yes, justice is all of that stuff matters. But things are only politically palatable to the degree that the American population is persuaded by certain things.

Yeah, and you know, I think my heart is first and foremost for the believers. That's right. To say it needs to start with us, because I think if we understand the scriptures, if we are praying for

the prosperity of our country, the spiritual prosperity of our country, if we're doing our part individually to share the gospel, if we're doing those things being salt and light, then we can have that impact.

I don't think I'm as hopeful that it's going to happen at a, you know, a national or even political level might, and I pray to that end, but I think it's going to take a pendulum swing for that to happen. The direction of the pendulum right now is certainly not a good one or a healthy one. But I think to your point, I think it helps to step back and first of all, look at the arguments of those who are pro-abortion.

What positions are they taking and interact honestly with them and respond to them? So it's kind of, you know, I think in our apologetics, it begins with sort of knocking the crutch out from under those who are wrongly arguing for abortion. And then I think it's setting forth in a positive way the biblical arguments that support the view that God hates abortion. He has a heart for life in the womb.

So I think it's both and, I don't think it's either or. And I think sadly, as you said, much of the discussion tends to be a lot of heat, but very little light. And so my hope and desire was just in a rational, logical, and hopefully biblical way to lay out both of those.

And I love what you said and it again reflects well in your pastor's heart. And I want any pastors to listening to note that. Yes, legislation matters, elections matter, justices matter, but you're calling, in my calling, we're called to pastor the flock that is among us.

And that means our responsibility is first of all, and last of all, that we pray for those other things and people from our midst may be disciplined to go affect some of those things. We're to train our people and make sure that they're disciplined in the word of God. They're persuaded by the scriptures.

That's our burden. I don't know how to change the nation, but I do know how to teach the scriptures and hopefully by God's grace to disciple his people. So I just want to underscore that's really wise and what you said also resonates with me, Tom, about first responding to some of the objections.

And maybe it's not always first, but just understanding the objections and then having the biblical tools and you do that so well in the book. I want to look in particular at this chapter four, flawed arguments of abortion and you lay out a number of them. I won't go through all of them, but I'm just going to give you the argument and then you give me a quick way to respond to this.

And this will help model for Christians out there. So one you say is historical acceptance. Someone might say, look, people have had abortions forever and ever.

And it wasn't a big deal until really Roe v. Wade and Christians and before that Catholic started making a big deal about it. But this has been around for a long time. You're making a big deal

about something that's just a part of the human condition.

Yeah, and I would say if you look objectively at history, that simply isn't supportable. The truth is the change in the view of abortion historically happened in conjunction with the Roe v. Wade decision. And he wrote a biased historical hit piece basically on those opposed to abortion and tried to make it sound as if in English and American law and common law that abortion had always been accepted when in reality that isn't true.

And I cite a great historical document for that because what you have is even a man whose pro-abortion but a lawyer has written a scathing rebuke of that rewrite that sort of, you know, history is always written by the winners, right? And so in this case, the pro-abortion group won and they've rewritten the history and it's just not the reality. If you look back over 800 years of English and then American common law, you'll find that abortion was not widely accepted or practiced. In fact, in 1973 when the Roe v. Wade decision was made, I believe it was 30 of the states didn't allow abortion for any reason.

16 of them, if I remember right, only allowed it in the case of rape incest and the life of the mother. Only four U.S. states in 1973 had abortion laws that allowed for more wider parameters for having abortions. And so that was not where the U.S. was in 1973.

And yet it makes it sound when you read Roe v. Wade or you hear the abortion is taught. It's like, you know, it was hugely accepted and we're just sort of formalizing what's always been true. And before Roe was overturned, the United States had the most extreme.

I mean, it's right up there, I forget the four nations, but one was China, one was North Korea, the United States, and one of them had the most permissive abortions. So to think, well, we're kind of in step, we were actually extreme outliers globally with allowing abortion for any reason up to full-term pregnancy. What about you hear this often in sort of hinted at in some of your reasons? Well, if abortion isn't legal, it's going to be back alleys, coat hangers, women are going to be having abortions by the thousands.

They're going to have abortions no matter what. And so we might as well make it safe, legal, and rare to use the Clinton triumph for it, though. I don't think you would hear many Democrats say those things and it's kind of slid over to almost, that's the Republican policy too often.

So how would you respond to that? Women are going to have it, so let's just make them safe. Well, I mean, first of all, it doesn't support, it's not supported, I should say by the science, because the reality is when you look at pre-1973, the illegal abortions that were taking place, the death rate was dropping simply because of advances in science and medicines and other processes. So that argument doesn't marry the reality of the data pre-73.

But in addition to that, larger and more importantly, is you are making that decision against the life of a child. You're basically saying, I'm going to say this one life is more important than



another life. So it's begging the question, you're starting with the assumption that that child's life in the womb is less important and therefore doesn't matter rather than looking at it as a real moral question and coming to a conclusion first.

It begs the question in my mind, and doesn't provide any evidence. That's right. Let me give you a few more slogans.

We want to keep the government out of the bedroom. This is a right to privacy. This is the most intimate decision between a woman and her doctor.

You people want to be peering into the sexual lives of Americans. How do you respond to that right to privacy argument? First of all, I would say that the whole idea that there's some constitutional support of a right to privacy has been argued based on two amendments. But read the two amendments and you won't find any right to privacy in those amendments.

And several of the justices, even in the dissenting opinions, have mentioned that both in *Roe v. Wade* and then supporting justices for the overturning of *Roe*. But I think that's simply not true either. The government does intrude into the bedroom.

If a man's abusing his wife, then they're going to step in and take measures against that man's abuse. If he kills his wife in the bedroom, that's obviously an extreme minor. Yeah.

You can't say we're not going to do it because they do and they do it routinely and have throughout American history. So it's really what they're saying is we just disagree that this is a moral problem, that this is something that should be addressed. What about this is probably the most common slogan, my body, my choice.

Get your hands off, my body, I should be able to do what I want with my body. And that's simply not scientifically accurate as well. That child has his or her own genetic fingerprint.

I mean, the genes in that child are marked differently than the mother. And from the very beginning, that's true. And so that life is a separate life marked by separate genetic markers.

That's not part of her body. And so it's, again, assumed something that hasn't been proven because it can't be proven. What about the, you know, this is your eighth one morally wrong, but each woman must decide.

This is a kind of, you sometimes hear this from politicians. Maybe I'm personally opposed, but I think there should still be freedom. You know, we don't legislate everything that we believe as Christians is wrong.

I could hear some people saying that. And I know we're not talking specifically here about legislation, but give us a response to that person who says, well, but we live in a fallen world. Sometimes we have to choose between really bad options.

And so sometimes that just means that, you know, it's sad and it's a broken place, but abortion

is tragically necessary. Yeah. And I would say there's an element of truth that argument.

I mean, let's admit that the government shouldn't and doesn't legislate every moral decision. The fact that a person is angry is not a approach of law, although it is of God's law, if it's sinful anger. And yet there are clearly offenses in God's mind and view that are worthy of capital punishment.

And once you say that, you're saying that it's elevated to a new level. This isn't okay. We need to decide whether or not a person is going to use birth control or we're going to the government's going to weigh in on other moral questions.

This is like saying, well, to use an analogy, because this has been used throughout history. The government's going to say, well, you know, infanticide, that's a, you know, that's a debated issue through history. And so we're not going to weigh in on that.

We're going to allow that. Most people today would not countenance that view. And yet it's the same argument and it's the same result.

A child dies. So you have to start with the real debate. And that is when does life begin? Is that person in the womb made of the image of God and therefore to be treated with the same dignity and respect as a person outside the womb? That's right.

And I want to come to that in just a moment. You know, you talk about rights and there's a long tradition in Western natural law theory between positive rights and negative rights. And those rights that the government ought to protect, not to be taken away.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and the declaration, the pursuit of happiness was a little interesting. Jeffersonian gloss. It was usually property, but life and liberty that you have, not a liberty to do whatever you want, but in so far as you are not taking away from other people's inalienable rights.

That is a view of government, which I think is consistent with with scripture scriptures and say what type of government monarchy or republic or democracy, but that there are certain things that the Romans 13 that the government, the magistrate is to be an avenger. He's to reward that, which is good and to punish that. And throughout human history, because of the 10 commandments and because they're written on the law of the human heart, we've understood that murder is one of those things.

If the government doesn't exist to punish murder, then it hardly has a reason for existence. So you're right to bring it back to this question, which just anyone out there as you're talking about this. Move past the slogans and you do this so well in your book, Tom, to the central issue, which you just raised, which is what is this life in the womb? Is this a human being? Is this a human person? Is this someone made in the image of God? I've heard this analogy before.

If you heard a rustling in the bushes and you were out hunting and you weren't sure if it was

your nephew who was traveling with you or if it was a deer or a wild boar or a squirrel, but there's something rustling. Now, you go and you shoot whatever is in the bushes. The legality and the moral rightness or wrongness of shooting into that bush is entirely dependent on what is in that bush.

And if it's a child, hopefully no one would say, well, you have a right to do that. If you're hunting deer and you got deer and it's in season, you can do that. So we all understand in simple scenarios that it absolutely makes an eternal difference and a moral difference, what we are talking about.

And we'll get into many of the specifics here, but what's your, hey, I got 60 seconds to talk to somebody about this and what's your go-to way to try to persuade them that this thing in the womb is not a thing but a human person? Yeah, I would do so in two ways. First of all, I just start with the big picture. I mean, even in the leading textbook for those who are helping mothers with children in the womb, they acknowledge that with fertilization life begins.

This is not debatable. Now, when we can talk about this if you want, the new argument doesn't even go there. Now, it's saying, well, life may begin with fertilization, but person will do it later.

And that's a different thing. But there's practically no scientific debate about that life in human life begins with fertilization biologically, with conception, biblically. That is a reality.

So I go there, but then I go to the description and say, look, let's look at what God says about life in the womb. Starting with, when he first makes Adam and Eve, he makes them in his image. And then you come to Genesis 5 and you read that Adam and Eve conceive and have Seth and he is now in their image and likeness.

Making it clear that while God imparted his image into Adam and Eve supernaturally, that same image is passed now through procreation. And of course, the man's only involvement in that process is at conception. And so that begins.

Romans 5 supports that. The whole idea that Adam's moral guilt is passed through procreation from one to another. That can only happen in conception.

So I would go to that argument, biblically, the other arguments that I've laid out, there are six of them, just laying out the biblical arguments for the fact that life in the womb is, in fact, made in the image of God, and is human life to be preserved and protected in the same way that life outside the womb is. And you're absolutely right that the leading embryology textbooks will tell you, every one of us has our origin in that embryo as the joining together of sperm and egg. That's all of us and all of our strength and brilliance and beauty.

Organically, that's us, the human person imprinted, as you said, with DNA. So there really is no scientific debate about whether that is new life. It is new life, whether it survives or not, that has all of that coded, and we know from God, information ready, now sometimes affected by the fall, but ready to grow into what we all can see are human beings, human life.

Before I get back to some of the arguments and the really good, where did we know where abortion came from? It's been around for a long time. But where did this come from spiritually? That even in our lifetimes, even in the last 25 years, I referenced the famous Bill Clinton line. Now, I mean, absolutely, people are literally parading their abortions, shouting their abortions.

It's become a kind of sacrament almost, not something we debate and it's safe legal and rare, but the very identity marker for some people and some tribes is their abortion. How do you diagnose this spiritually? Well, you know, I would look at it in two ways. First of all, sort of holistically, I think you have to say Jesus diagnoses it perfectly in John 8:44, when he says that Satan is a murderer and was a murderer from the beginning, and he's a liar.

I mean, that's simply abortion, right? I mean, he is the one who institutes the destruction of human life. You see it right after the fall with Cain killing his brother Abel. You see it throughout the scripture.

You see it throughout human history. So in the end, the destruction of the image of God in human beings is satanic because he hates God. You know, I had a theology prof when I was in seminary who made the point very well.

He said, you know, if you walked into the room and you saw me with a picture of my wife, and there's this lovely picture of her, and you see me stabbing it with knives and cutting up into pieces and throwing the pieces in the trash can and burning it, you'd say, there's a person who has a problem with his wife. Well, that's what's really behind this. Satan and his battle against God, he can't get to God.

He can't destroy God himself. So he seeks every in every way he can to destroy the image of God and to destroy it through murder. And he's he has brilliantly then added to that lying which and deception through which he has persuaded an entire generation, our generation that in fact that that life in the womb isn't a person.

It's just a piece of tissue part of my body. I can get rid of it as I choose. And so you marry the two together, the lying and the murder.

It comes from the heart of Satan. So that was that'd be one way I would answer it holistically. But I'd also say that just very practically, I think it's Romans one because you mentioned, you know, there's a time when people had abortions and there was shame that came with that.

Now it's champion. How does that happen? Well, it's Romans one. You know, as people refuse to acknowledge their creator, as they refuse to give in thanks, they slip into paganism and God gives them over three times.

You know, Romans one, he gives them over. And the end of that after sexual sin, the acceptance and championing of homosexuality comes then a reprobate mind. And what is a reprobate mind? Well, he explains it at the end of Romans one.

It's not just that you do sin. It's that you love it and celebrate it. And now you're saying you turn it on its head.

Now what sinners once did and I've always done, but we're ashamed of. Now they say, no, I'm not ashamed of it. I'm proud of it.

It's good. And what God says is actually bad. We want to take a moment to thank our friends at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary for their support of the podcast.

And we've been encouraging you to read pastoral theology, the pastor in the various duties of his office by Thomas Murphy, just published by Log College Press, which is out of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. I did a podcast not long ago with Jonathan Master, their president about this book. Both of us absolutely loved this book.

Whether you're Presbyterian or not, a pastor just starting out newly retired or you just want to know what pastors should be doing. This is an expansive, practical, accessible, comprehensive book. Go get it.

Free audio is available on Greenville's website where you can also order a copy, [gpts.edu slash pastoral theology](http://gpts.edu/pastoral-theology). We also want to mention our friends at Westminster Theological Seminary. We know if you're listening to this, you probably are interested in learning God's word and growing in your understanding of the scriptures that can be a challenge.

You can reach a plateau and sort of feel stalled out, but it can help to do it with other people. You can learn the subject matter from experts from those who have studied and are good teachers and develop a cohesive understanding of scripture from Genesis to Revelation in as little as one and a half years with the WTS. They're a fully online Master of Arts in Theological Studies program.

So you get good teachers, you'll get the discipline of assignments and degree and group of people to move through the program with hundreds of students from around the globe in a program designed specifically with busy people in mind. Learn more at [wts.edu slash M-A-T-S](http://wts.edu/M-A-T-S). What would you say personally if there's somebody listening to this, maybe someone passed it on and said we don't want you to listen to this, and it's a woman who's having a visceral negative reaction to everything we're saying.

Maybe she's had an abortion, or she's contemplated it, or maybe she's simply in the kind of moral, cultural space where this is taken to be almost sacred. And right now she's thinking, why did my parents tell me to listen to it? I hate what these two middle-aged dudes are telling me. She didn't say dudes, probably, bros.

What's your personal password? Just speak to that person who viscerally just says, I hate what you're telling me right now, and you guys have no right. You're a bunch of men. You don't know what it's like, and you're telling me what to do.

How do you try to get to the heart of that kind of response? Yeah, I would just say, you know, if that's your thinking, if that's where you are, I would say, I understand that, and I think we're all prone to that by nature to respond viscerally against what God tells us to do because we're sinners, by nature. And so I think you have to step back and say, it doesn't matter what I think. It doesn't matter what you think.

It doesn't matter what your listener thinks. The question is, what does God say about this issue? If God is in fact the creator and God has a right then as the creator and therefore the owner of everything he's made to stipulate how we live and how we think about all moral-related issues, then it doesn't matter what I think or what she thinks. It matters what God thinks, and that's my heart in the book, is to say, look, and I would encourage her, just read it, just get the book and read it.

I'm not angry. I'm just saying, let's talk through this issue together. Let's reason together with what the culture says to support this view, and let's look at it realistically, and then let's look at what the scriptures say.

And again, I would urge her, don't listen to me. Look at the scripture. Look at what does God say.

That's what matters. And then to the one who's been involved and maybe had an abortion, I would just say, that's the amazing reality of what the scriptures teach us about God. That while God is just, he's also gracious.

And in his love for mankind, he sent his only begotten son into the world to live the perfect life that we were supposed to have lived. And then to die in the place of all who would ever believe in him, and then God raised him from the dead to show his acceptance of that. And the same grace that's offered for every other sin in the world through the death of Jesus Christ is offered for the sin of abortion.

Abortion is not an unforgivable sin. Anybody who will repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will have that sin forgiven. And the beauty, as you know, of the gospel is that it's not just forgiveness, it's positive righteousness.

The moment a person believes, if they've been involved in an abortion, the moment that they believe in Christ, God imputes to them Christ's perfect righteousness. That 33 years of perfection, when he did everything right, as we've done everything wrong. And part of that is God then looks on that person who's forgiven, who maybe had an abortion, or even participated in performing an abortion.

God then looks at that forgiven center as if they had protected life in the womb like Jesus protected life in the womb. That's the beauty of the gospel. And that would be my appeal.

That's wonderful. I want to hit on this. You lay it out very clearly, these different reasons, and you already alluded to this one argument that would say, okay, yes, life begins at conception.

See that scientifically, you can see it scripturally, but personhood is something else. And in fact, this got stirred up a little bit online last year about insolvency. Maybe the soul comes into the human body at some later time.

Give us some of your reasons, because you have a lot of good arguments, and I learned in this book, there were things, okay, I know he's going to go to Psalm 139, I know he's going to go to Exodus. But then there were other connections in place, I thought, that's a really good argument, I haven't thought of that way before. So lay out some of your specific arguments and texts, not only that life begins at conception, but human personhood does.

Well, I would say, first of all, that God regards individuals as persons in the womb. He treats them as persons. When you look at the terms that are used, both in Hebrew and Greek, the same terms are used both for human children who have already been born as well as for those who are in the womb.

So whether you're talking Hebrew or Greek, the same document, both of those and give examples in the book, I think when you look at the consequences for harming life in the womb, I think that's a powerful argument. When you look at Exodus 21, you see that the requirements that are laid out and the penalties are the same for the mother or for the child. In the case of the child being born prematurely and no harm is done to the mom or to the child, then there's a financial penalty.

But if either the mom or the child is injured or dies, then the law of Lex Talionis comes in. I, for an eye, tooth for tooth, life for life, for either the mom or the child. And so that immediately says that God is treating human life, whether the life of a mother, a fully developed adult human or whether a child in the womb, God is treating them exactly the same and saying life for life, implying that they are equal in his sight.

And so I just think when you look at how God treats life both in the womb and it's treated the same way as those who are adult humans, you can't say they're not persons. And you make really good connections here to Christ. Luke 1, 43, how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Elizabeth's words are profound testimony to the person of our Lord Jesus.

He was and is the God man. But are words also attest to the fact I'm reading here from your book that in Mary's womb was the unborn Messiah, the Christ, likely five to seven day old embryo. But he was already fully God and fully man and he is Elizabeth and our Lord.

Talk about how Christology affects our understanding of human personhood and what goes wrong with both if we don't see that life and the amago day and personhood begins that conception. Yeah, no, you're absolutely right. I think honestly, I think that is a crucial argument for personhood because what you're arguing, let's say there's a believer listening who says, no, I'm not sure that that that personhood.

Yes, maybe biological life begins at fertilization conception, but not personhood. You've got a major problem with a number of texts. I'm sorry with Isaac as well as outside the womb.

And so you have a number of examples, but the Lord is the example because at the moment of conception, you have the eternal son of God adding to himself a full and complete humanity. And so he is the God man at that point. So what are you going to argue with taking the other sort of logical position that some take? He didn't become a human person until later in his pregnancy.

That's not what Elizabeth says. That's not what what Mary says in terms of her magnificat. You don't have the wiggle room to say that there was some time between fertilization and when the Holy Spirit implanted in Mary's womb, the humanity of Christ, and then somehow at some point, he became a person.

That's right. If you have any kind of insolment or later personhood, you have adoption as Christology of some kind of heretical view of the hypostatic union, the person of Christ, the human and divine nature. So this really is of central importance.

Yeah. I mean, honestly, it's no different on the front end. If you do that with Christ on the front end, it's no different than what some of the heretics and the charismatic movement do on the back end.

That somehow the deity of Christ was gone either through his entire earthly ministry life, earthly ministry, or in the case of some on the cross, that he was just man and not God on the cross. So it's really the same approach, as you said, it's a form of adoptionism at that point. One of the acronyms that's always stuck with me, and I think I've seen it on Stand to Reason and Greg Cogle, I think Scott Clusendorf uses it, and that's the sled acronym.

When you talk about life in the womb and outside of the womb, and this just sticks with you, you can do this with someone in a friendly argument size. Well, does someone become more of a human person because they're bigger or smaller? Does Shaquille O'Neal have more personhood than Simone Biles? We all say, no, size doesn't determine whether you're in the image of God. L, level of development.

Yes, a four-year-old is not as developed as a 21-year-old. A four-year-old woman's body functions differently and cannot do all the things that a 21-year-old can. But nobody says that because of that level of development or the environment.

You move through the birth canal and you now have a different environment, but nobody thinks that you're less of a human person because you live in a building or a hut or a cave. And then dependency is, yes, a child in the womb is dependent upon that mother. So, as a child outside the womb, to be breastfed or if that's unveiled, to be bottle-fed, there are people who are dependent upon insulin every day.

People who are dependent on dialysis, they're dependent on outside assistance for their life to



live. So, just sled. You work through and you can see the emptiness, and yet it can be hard for Christians to know on the spot, how do I respond to some of these? Just a couple more questions for you, Tom.

I really like your chapter on history. Just tell us about that because we believe in solo-scriptura. So, the scriptures can correct the church makes mistakes.

And yet, we surely ought to have a default that says, if the church at all times and in all places until about 50 years ago has said the same thing, we better have some really, really good reasons. So, what has the church's witness been on abortion? Yeah, and the answer is whether you look, even predating the church, you look at Jewish sources, you know, when you look at the Old Testament and how that's interpreted, or you look at Christian sources, you'll find that, as you said, until about 50 years ago, the church was unanimous on this. I try to bring in a number of quotes from early church history, go through the Reformation period, even into the modern era and say, this is not a question.

And when you look, for example, at the consensus from the Didick K in the first century, all the way to the great confessions, whether you're talking about the Westminster Confession or the London Baptist Confession, you're looking at them saying exactly the same thing. The church universal saying, no, this is clear. The scripture does not permit the taping of life in the womb.

That is the same thing. It really goes back to the covenant with Noah. You know, if a man sheds another man's blood by a man, shall his blood be shed.

And that's true whether that life is in the womb or whether that life has come out of the womb, as you said. The environment doesn't change the reality of the personhood. So, yeah, history is absolutely unequivocally clear on this issue.

You simply don't find, you might find an outlier here and there, but you will not find any consensus in any generation of the church other than what you and I were talking about. So just a couple more questions, penultimate question here. Talk a little bit about some of the hard cases and you have an appendix in the back.

And in particular, you'll hear people say, what about rape and incest and then what about the life of the mother. So help us think through abortion in those situations. Well, I think first of all, you have to realize that those are extremely difficult situations and our hearts go out to those who find themselves in those situations.

But I think you also have to admit that what is really, in the case of abortion because of rape, it's about 1% of the abortions that are committed. When you're talking about incest, it's 0.5%. So it's a basically 1.5% of the abortions fall into those categories. And yet, those are used as excuses for essentially abortion on demand.

So I think first of all, you got to start there and say, let's be clear on how those cases are being used by those who want really abortion on demand. But then let's talk about the specific cases.

I mean, clearly the scripture addresses the issues of rape and incest.

So you're really just talking rape. In the case of rape, then the guilty party under God's law was to die. I mean, they are guilty of a criminal offense.

But what about the innocent party, the person who was sent against? I mean, our heart goes out to them. They're clearly, they've been victimized and God's heart goes out to them as a person. And God will do justice.

As you know, justice will be done against that perpetrator, either in this life or in eternity or both. But if that person repents and believes, Christ paid for that sin, but if they don't, then justice will be done. No sin will go unpunished.

And I find great comfort in that, as I think about those situations. But what about that child? That child is, in fact, as if everything else that the book argues and the scripture is clear on is true, that child is a child, even though conceived in that way. And so to sin against God and that child by overcoming what is a horrific situation, one sin, I would say, doesn't justify another.

And so let's deal with that. But I also think people need to understand that in the case of rape, there is a period of time between intercourse and conception when that can be addressed with estrogen. And often is.

In fact, I documented the book several hospitals and cases where that is dealt with successfully. So abortion is not the best, the short term solution or the ethical and moral solution. And that procedure you're talking about would be preventing conception.

That's correct. It's preventing conception. But then once there is conception, what about in that case, I would say the church needs to rally around that woman, recognize that she is a victim and do everything we can to love her and care for her.

And support her as she brings that child to term. That child in her womb, in one sense, is as much a victim as she is. And so needs to be supported and cared for.

And whatever ultimate decision she makes about that child in terms of whether she's going to care for the child or give the child up for adoption. Those are both moral and biblical legitimate decisions. But in terms of ending the life of the child, the wrong done to her doesn't justify another wrong.

And again, I say that not in a non compassionate way. I can't imagine being in that position, but it's still a question of right or wrong. It's not a question of I've been sinned against.

Therefore, I can take whatever measures I choose because of the emotional pain that I'm seeing. And I think just thinking persuading that someone may say that, you know, a politician, I think sometimes says that as a way to, like you said, not really have restrictions at all. But if you really meant it's just the exception, you want to say to that person, okay, you're saying

that's just the exception.

So now argue to me, why was abortion wrong in every other situation? Well, you have to get to some of the arguments we're talking about, about life, about personhood. So if those are the arguments, why it's wrong generally, what has changed other than perhaps thinking with our feelings and the feelings are good, but we need to be led by God's word to show compassion the right way. What about the other, you know, an ectopic pregnancy, life of the mother, you often hear that as the other reason.

Well, if these abortion laws pass that conservatives want, there's going to be women who are dying in hospital beds because they're not allowed to get the abortions that they need to save their lives. Yeah, in my response, I mean, those are related, but two separate issues, you know, ectopic pregnancies tend to unfortunately not survive very long because there's nothing, there's no support system for them to develop. And so most of the time, that is simply the removal of a child who has already died.

That's totally different than abortion. But if it is, it's no different ethically than a doctor who's presented with a crash site where there are different victims, and now what is the doctor and the mother in this case, what is their goal, and that is to preserve the life of as many as they possibly can. And that's certainly true in the case of a mother who life is at risk.

Eventually, it may come to the fact that a decision has to be made, and just like it is in all medical triage, you know, which life is the most survival. But you might also argue, and many do, for self-defense on the mother's case, you know, now, you know, her life is threatened by this child. And so the idea would be, and I think this is the ethical solution, is if it reaches a point of crisis where a decision has to be made and you have to take the child early, you take the child early, hoping that you can save both lives.

But even the process of that, the child's life is lost, that's life in a fallen world. That's a totally different thing. And then stepping in to take the life of the child.

Yeah, it's not just mere semantics to say, this is not an abortion. They have the same result in losing a child, but you're saying in order to save the mother's life, because if you don't, if you say, well, we want to save the child's life, so we're going to leave this ectopic present, that child is not going to survive with a mother who dies. So we're removing the child a very, very premature birth, which, except in some very rare circumstances, have not proven able to survive.

But it's not just, we're not just trying to twist ourselves, we're saying something, you know, I was just talking to a woman this week, and it's somewhat similar, who's, I'm sure you get this as a pastor, has a question about, I have a loved one who's been on life support measures for a long time, and I'm the one, and the person didn't have a living will, and what do I do? And usually when people ask that, I think they're looking for it. Do I have moral permission to remove this? And just the simple distinction I said is there's a difference between ending

treatment and ending life. The Lord ends life.

You make a decision sometimes to end extraordinary treatment. We're not making a decision to end the life of an ectopic embryo. You're removing that to save the life of the mother, which will not be saved without it in hopes, but with a realistic understanding that this is very likely not this child will not survive.

And I think you laid that out very well in the book. I want to just give Tom the last word here, and I just want everybody to get this book, *Biblical View of Abortion*, by Tom Pennington, *God's Heart for Life in the womb*. You could use it in a Bible study.

Why don't I ask you to pray for us and make that your prayer for us and for anyone listening on this? What really is a Holocaust issue in our day, 73 million worldwide, a million every year. We don't want to throw around words like Holocaust flippantly, but we are talking about the greatest moral outrage in our day. And we need Christians informed and biblically informed that you've done that well.

So pray for us, Pastor Tom. Our father, our own hearts are so deeply moved by this issue that I'm sure we can't begin to imagine how your own heart is affected. Lord, we thank you that you have given us your word, that you've not left us in the dark on this issue, but you provided direction through your word.

Help us as your people, or help us to always ask the question, what does the scripture say? Father, give us a heart and passion for that. And I pray, Father, for those who are listening, those who have read or may read the book, what I pray, that you would use it for those who are already convinced to arm them, to equip them, and to give them yet a further heart for life in the womb, that their heart for those in the womb would match your own heart. Father, I pray for those who are unconvinced.

I pray that you would help them to step back and, and honestly, outside of their, the pressure of the culture, to genuinely ask the question, what does the scripture say? What does my God, my Creator, my Redeemer say about this issue? And Father, I pray that you give them the courage, the moral courage, to adopt your view on abortion. And Lord, I pray, Lord, for those who have, who have the guilt of this on their hands, perhaps having been involved in an abortion or even perform them. Lord, I pray for those who are already in Christ, give them the full assurance of their justification, help them to see that they stand perfect in your Son, and that their sins in the whole are gone, and that you have credited to them the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and that they don't have to bear the guilt of that past.

And Lord, I pray for those who have not come to faith in Christ, but who have been involved in abortion, or to open their hearts, to see, to hear, to understand, and may you draw them, even through this issue, through the guilt that they experienced, to the saving grace that is found in your perfect Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen. Amen.

Thank you, Tom, for being on the program, and thank you to everyone for listening to life and books and everything. A ministry of clearly reformed, you can get episodes like this and thousands of other resources at [clearlyreformed.org](http://clearlyreformed.org). Until next time, glorify God, enjoy Him forever, and read a good book.