

# The *SBJT* Forum: Engaging the Abortion Issue

*Editor's Note:* Readers should be aware of the forum's format. D. A. Carson, Gregory Alan Thornbury, James Parker III, and Chad Owen Brand have been asked specific questions to which they have provided written responses. These writers are not responding to one another. The journal's goal for the Forum is to provide significant thinkers' views on topics of interest without requiring lengthy articles from these heavily-committed individuals. Their answers are presented in an order that hopefully makes the forum read as much like a unified presentation as possible.

## **SBJT: What are some practical strategies for addressing the abortion issue?**

**D. A. Carson:** We have just "celebrated" ("endured"?) the thirtieth anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. Countless commentators have weighed in to express their thanks for the Supreme Court's decision, and voiced their determination to preserve it; no fewer have articulated their resolution to keep pushing for court appointments that will ultimately bring that decision down.

Transparently, the mood of the country has changed somewhat during the last three decades. While many pro-choice voices still defend the Court's decision with virulent rhetoric, and while the media, by and large, hue that line, only a deaf ear could fail to pick up other voices. On many university campuses today, one can hear students refer to themselves as "survivors": they are painfully aware that they could as easily have been aborted as the tens of millions who were actually destroyed. In 1999, the Higher Education Research Institute published a survey of 275,811 incoming college freshmen, which showed that only 52.5% of the men and 49.5% of the women thought abortion should be legal. This represents a 14% decline since 1990. A poll published in 2000 by the *Los Angeles Times* showed that

only 43% of Americans support a simple continuation of *Roe v. Wade*—down from 56% in 1991. It has been widely reported that during the last presidential elections, 27% of those polled said they were more likely to vote for George Bush because he was pro-life, while only 18% of those polled said they were more likely to vote for Al Gore because he was pro-choice. Some high-profile feminists, such as Germaine Greer in her 1999 book *The Whole Woman*, are now arguing that abortion has become just one more tool of oppression in the hands of the male-dominated medical community, which has consistently failed to inform women of the risks. Greer speaks out of bitter experience: several abortions have left her sterile.

In the entire field of bioethics, questions surrounding abortion represent only one tiny part of the complex issues that must be addressed. In terms of the number of people affected, however—not only the aborted, but also the mothers, family members, and those touched by the decisions—no subject in bioethics is more far-reaching.

I do not intend to lay out the case against easy abortion. That has been done by many writers. Most Christians, and

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many others, find the arguments convincing. What I shall do in the space allotted me is to offer some practical suggestions about how those of us who hold such views should proceed from here. For this is not the time to do nothing more than wring our hands in despair and bemoan the wickedness of the age.

(1) Circulate hard facts. Whether in private conversations, or (for those with broader influence) in more public arenas, focus on the facts, those stubborn pieces of data which, on the long haul, turn out to be strangely convincing. Back in the late sixties and early seventies, abortion rights advocates insisted that abortion would make illegitimacy dwindle away, and that every child who actually then came to birth would be “wanted,” not unwanted. In consequence, it was argued, large social problems would diminish; child battering would become a thing of the past; young couples would not be trapped in miserable, forced marriages; women could remain in university or in the workforce if they unexpectedly became pregnant. The social gains would result in a massive reduction of welfare: we were asked to believe that abortion is in part an economic issue. And in any case, experts were predicting that without abortion, human overpopulation would usher in scarcely imaginable disaster. Paul Ehrlich, an expert on the Checkerspot butterfly, wrote *The Population Bomb*, a 1968 best-seller, in which he argued that in less than two decades, all ocean life would die of DDT poisoning, and thousands of human beings would die of smog in New York City and Los Angeles. Pollution would reduce life expectancy in the US to forty-two years. We were constantly bombarded with stories of some innocent, young girl going to a back-room abortion

quack and then dying of the internal bleeding. Besides, wealthy women could always find a proper doctor to do the job; it was the poor who were disadvantaged, so that access to abortion was simply a matter of social justice.

Three decades later, what are the facts? Illegitimacy is a much greater social problem today than it was in the early seventies. In 1970, 10.7% of live births were to unmarried mothers. By 1975, only a couple of years after *Roe v. Wade*, the rate was 14.5%. Today the rate is 33%; among black children, the rate today approaches 70%. Paul Ehrlich doubtless knew a lot about the Checkerspot butterfly, but his projections regarding human population trends were not only wrong, they approached sheer silliness. The claim that failure to secure court-protected abortion would result in tens of thousands of mothers endangered by back-street butchers was not true in 1972; ironically, it may be closer to the truth now. In 1940, the National Center for Health Statistics said there were 1,313 deaths from illegal abortions, most from infections, not bleeding. By 1966, the figure was 159 deaths: antibiotics had come a long way. By 1972, the last statistical year before *Roe*, the figure was 41. Of course, abortion activists insisted that most of the deaths took place in secret, and were not counted in the statistics. Probably there was some truth to the claim, but it is hard to overlook the sharp drop anyway. Nor is it all that clear that those who practiced abortion were untrained: not a few doctors broke the law, but they were still doctors. Former medical director for Planned Parenthood, Dr Mary Calderone, estimated in 1960 that nine out of ten illegal abortions were being performed by licensed physicians. Estimates of how many abortions took place

per year range from about 200,000 to 400,000. The contemporary figure is many times higher, and it is far from clear that the standard of care has improved. Approximately two-thirds of contemporary ob-gyn doctors refuse to do abortions; a majority of the remaining third perform no more than four or five abortions per year. This has encouraged the multiplication of abortion specialists, and because abortion is such a sensitive subject, the supervision of their clinics is woefully inadequate. A probing series in *The New York Times* in 1991 uncovered “filth” and depicted “butchery” at dozens of dirty, unlicensed clinics. This paper, so “liberal” in its leanings, was prompted to write the exposé after several hideous abortion deaths hit the national headlines. Several writers have pointed out that if a researcher takes the time to look, it is easy to pull up hundreds of newspaper accounts of documented abortion deaths that have occurred during the past decade in walk-in abortion clinics in all our major cities. And does *anyone* still think that the prevalence of abortion reduces welfare rolls? Has the number of battered or unwanted children declined? We have merely made our society coarser than it was some decades ago, more self-centered, less concerned with any human life other than my own. And there are costs beyond the public “social” costs. In addition to the awful guilt that many women feel, a Wirthlin poll, published in 1998, discovered that 56% of women felt that abortion had hindered their relationships with men. Circulate the hard facts.

(2) Present such facts as the *moral* position, but never with a self-righteous or triumphalist stance. Quite apart from the fact that any informed Christian is aware that self-righteousness and triumphalism

are morally repugnant and deeply offensive to Almighty God (who would much rather witness our contrition, poverty of spirit, and self-conscious dependence upon him), we ought to remember that self-righteousness in the political arena is often self-defeating, and triumphalism is a turn-off. In short, while presenting the facts, we must take great pains not only to present them as the intrinsically *moral* position, but also to articulate that position with persuasive humility. And that means, among other things, that we should be careful not to make this primarily a *Republican* position, making it almost impossible for a committed Democrat to join us. This distinction is all the more urgent when we reflect on the politics of the African-American community. A higher percentage of African-Americans are pro-life than is the percentage of European-Americans. But if we drum the abortion issue as primarily a Republican issue, then African-Americans, the overwhelming majority of whom vote Democrat, will simply ignore the argument and continue to vote Democrat. The issue must be seen in terms of hard facts, and in terms of their intrinsic morality, without much reference to a political party at all.

(3) Go for the small gain. And then keep going. Some strategists have advised conservatives to vote *against* a ban on partial birth abortions and other steps, on the ground that by removing from public view the most ugly and repulsive of the various facets of abortion, it will be harder in the future to arouse public sentiment to ban all or most abortions. But this “all or nothing” strategy often comes up dry. It makes sense *only* if one is certain that the strategy will work. Failing that, it is merely a recipe for continued legislative defeat.

Politics is the art of the possible. The

“all or nothing” approach rarely works. Moreover, sometimes it is the persistent plodder who keeps gnawing away at a problem who eventually gets even the big piece of legislation passed.

On the short haul, then, we ought to go after a complete ban on partial-birth abortions. In this procedure the physician partly delivers the late-term baby, then kills it by piercing his or her skull and attaching a powerful suction device that sucks out the baby’s brain. It is surely an encouraging sign that President Bush, in his State of the Union address, promised to send to Congress legislation that will ban this ghastly brutality. Similar legislation failed to get by Congress six years ago, and then-President Clinton said he would veto the legislation even if it passed. But here there is an opportunity to make a small but important gain. Take it. It is not everything, but it is better than nothing, and all who work to pass such legislation should be strengthened and encouraged.

(4) Make sure that opposition to abortion is married to support for unwed mothers, counseling centers, practical help for under-age moms, and the like. Not only is such care mandated by the most elementary Christian compassion, but it also undercuts the arguments of those who say that confessional Christians neither understand nor care about the plight of women who, often out of something close to desperation, think that abortion is the only reasonable choice they have.

(5) Expose the emptiness of “hard case” legislation. Every time that a pro-choice spokesperson and a pro-life spokesperson enter into debate, it is not long before the former brings up the horrible problem of a fifteen-year-old who has been raped and

become pregnant. That does happen, of course, and those who have never been brutalized in this way cannot possibly appreciate its full horrors. Nevertheless, the reason why the expression “Hard cases make bad laws” is so common a truism is because it is true! People are being manipulated to allow abortion in the overwhelming majority of instances where there has not been rape by appealing to the smallest fraction of 1% where rape has occurred. One should not legislate for the hard case; rather, if need be, one makes exceptions for the hard case. Regardless of what one thinks is best in the case of rape, it would surely be an astonishingly important step forward if abortion were legally banned in all cases *except* rape. And one of the most obvious ways of nullifying the “hard case” arguments that are regularly advanced as irrefutable pro-choice arguments is by exposing their emptiness. Demonstrate not only the axiom that “hard cases make bad legislation,” but call the person’s bluff by allowing that you could support legislation that banned abortions in all instances except the “hard cases” that the other party has in mind. It will quickly become transparent that the appeal to “hard cases” is often little more than a rhetorical ruse to maintain abortion in its present form.

(6) Recognizing that the activist court of the last few decades is ultimately going to call the shots on these matters, the business of judicial appointments has become more and more important. Small wonder that the process of Senate ratification of judicial appointments during the last couple of years has become more and more politicized. That means, in turn, that informed Christians should give careful thought to the ways in which they may strengthen the resolve, the insight, and the

influence of those who are determined to appoint, or ratify the appointment of, judges who will be less than eager to turn the judicial branch into a legislative branch, and who do not think *Roe v. Wade* is the moral high ground, but an indefensible judicial intrusion into the responsibilities of both houses of Congress. In the nature of the case, we are not going to get there quickly. But that is why persistence and perseverance may, on the long haul, by God's grace, prove to be the crucial attitudinal stances needed to bring about the end of this inhumane and sometimes barbaric evil.

**SBJT: What historical lessons can we learn from the grim legacy of abortion in Russia?**

**Gregory Alan Thornbury:** On November 20, 1920, the nascent Soviet government released what it termed a simple “public health announcement.” The statement, a missive intended as law, proclaimed a new fully funded program for women: legalized abortions, available free of charge at state-run hospitals. By keeping the abortion rate high and the birth rate low, Soviet leaders and their sycophants hoped to keep more women in the labor force, economically viable and controlled by the state.<sup>1</sup>

The legalization of abortion in the Soviet Union emerged as but one important facet of a systematic extermination program of a theologically grounded social morality. Only months after the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917, the new regime issued a series of marriage laws that deemphasized the importance of wedlock and approved an extremely permissive “no-fault” divorce clause. As a precursor, other leading authorities had earlier endorsed state-sanctioned promis-

cuity—labeled “free love”—as a viable alternative to marriage.<sup>2</sup> Regarding the state's disdain for wedlock, N. Krylenko, the people's commissar of justice, stated that “the main purpose of the legislation was to undermine religion-sanctified marriage.”<sup>3</sup> By subverting family life, the Soviets self-consciously attempted to defy what even they seemingly knew: marriage is a decidedly *religious* act, performed in the presence of God.

To its dismay, the government's agenda succeeded wildly. Divorce rates skyrocketed. In Moscow, even state statisticians reported a rate of three abortions to every one live birth, a shocking population implosion which in 1936 led Stalin to seek desperately for a way to attenuate the damage.<sup>4</sup> Unaware of the grim realities effected by the legalization of abortion, social liberals in America lauded what they deemed the progressive nature of Soviet thinking on the issue. As journalist Marvin Olasky writes, “even...the sedate *American Journal of Public Health* in 1931,” argued on the basis of Soviet practice “that ‘Legalized abortion is the only means for women's emancipation’” in modern times.<sup>5</sup>

Despite modernist fantasies, abortion did not emancipate Soviet women. It placed them in a brutal bondage, a slavery that remains to the present hour. Recently, the Russian Health Ministry revealed an abortion to live birth rate of 1.7:1 in Russia, a number five times higher than in the United States. Epidemic abortions among these young women have produced an unintended consequence: widespread infertility. As a result, researchers estimate a twenty-five percent population decline in Russia during the next half-century, a deterioration that makes one wonder whether such numerical decline will

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inevitably lead to cultural demise.<sup>6</sup>

Other countries would do well to learn from the tragic legacy of the long Soviet war against the family. The way a nation regards marriage and the protection of its unborn children presages the long-term health of its society. Disregard toward such defining cultural institutions is nothing less than anger directed toward God who created them. But such defiance is never taken lightly, for although even “the wrath of men praises God . . . He is to be feared by the kings of the earth” (Ps 76:10, 12, ESV).

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Even purportedly “Soviet women’s organizations” supported the policy. Although Harvard Law professor Lawrence Tribe offers such details to illustrate the fact that the policy did not advance women’s rights, the data nonetheless highlights the amoral character of the Soviet position. See Lawrence Tribe, *Abortion: The Clash of Absolutes* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992) 56.

<sup>2</sup>Mervyn Matthews, “Soviet Social Policies,” in *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. George Schopflin (New York: Facts on File, 1986) 522.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* The Russian Orthodox church blesses and sanctions marriage in Russian history.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>5</sup>Marvin Olasky brilliantly chronicles this and other such developments on the left in *Abortion Rites: A Social History of Divorce in America* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1992) 250.

<sup>6</sup>Sharon LaFraniere, “Russians Feel Abortion’s Complications,” *Washington Post*, 22 February 2003, A16.

#### the abortion controversy?

**James Parker, III:** The fundamental issue underlying the abortion controversy is the question of what constitutes human personhood. All consequences flow from how one defines human personhood. A distinction can be made between person and human. For example, there are persons that are not human beings (i.e., angels, demons, the three persons of the Trinity, and space aliens if they exist). The pro-abortionists might well define a fetus as a human being but not a person. The fundamental distinction between the pro-life and pro-abortion position is the assignment of human personhood to the unborn child. The pro-abortion side wants to define human personhood not by “being” but by “function.” They may concede that the zygote and fetus are human beings (they certainly are not monkeys or pigs) but not persons (and thus qualifying for full protection under the law). So the question is raised as to whether there are human beings that are not persons, for only persons are protected under the law. One of the reasons slavery survived was the ability of slavery’s advocates to proscribe the protection of personhood to slaves. Slaves were not considered to be fully persons. The issue is central because if the fetus is not a person, then abortion is indeed just a medical procedure on the order of the removal of an appendix, not murder—the unjustified taking of a human person’s life. There is no debate that from the moment of conception the genetic identity of the zygote is that of a human being—a member of the species *homo sapiens*. While one cannot deny the biological identity of the human being, one can try to deny personhood based on a functional definition of personhood.

The attempt to define personhood in

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**SBJT: What is the fundamental issue in**

terms of functionality leads to a quagmire of contradictions and incoherencies. Functionality basically says that personhood consists in being able to perform certain physical or mental acts. If human beings are unable to perform certain behavioral acts, they are not persons. Common sense, however, tells us that one can be a person without performing certain human functions such as using language, exercising reason, or making choices. Exercising these activities is an indication of being a person, but they do not define personhood. To confuse the sign with what is being signified is a fundamental error. Because human beings are persons, they can exercise certain functions, not vice versa.

Peter Kreeft undercuts the notion of functionality as a basis for human personhood by arguing that the crucial point is not which acts are to count as defining a person (is it speaking, or reasoning, or loving?) but the relation of these personal acts to the person-actor. Is a person:

- (1) One who is consciously performing personal acts? If so, people who are asleep are not people, and we may kill them.
- (2) One with a present capacity to perform personal acts? That would include sleepers but not people in a coma.
- (3) One with a history of performing personal acts? That would mean that a 17-year-old who was born in a coma 17 years ago and is just now coming out of it is not a person. Also, by this definition there can be no first personal act, no personal acts without a history of past personal acts.
- (4) One with a future capacity for performing personal acts? That would mean that dying persons are not persons. Surely the correct answer is that a person is one with a natural, inherent capacity for performing personal acts. Why is one able to perform personal acts under proper conditions? Only because

one is a person. One grows into the ability to perform personal acts only because one already is the kind of thing that grows into the ability to perform personal acts, i.e., a person ("What Is a Human Person," *Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship Bulletin*, 11 [March/April 1996] 6).

So personhood must be defined as being a member of the species *homo sapiens*, not on functional grounds. Theologically, Christians have historically affirmed that intrinsic worth and value is ascribed to *homo sapiens* because they were created in the image of God; therein lies their value—not some utilitarian function they are able to perform. The move from a "sanctity of life" ethic to a "quality of life" ethic betrays the fundamental and prior shift of value from being to function. Assigning value to function rather than to being has dire cultural consequences from abortion to euthanasia. On the popular level people must find their identity and worth in their jobs (what they do), not their being (who they are).

Anyone who does not match up to what those in power determine to be "quality of life" is in danger of being eliminated. And make no mistake about it, a "quality of life" standard ironically becomes totally subjective. Without an objective standard norm for life (sanctity of life), the whole enterprise descends into "might makes right." If personhood is a developing thing (according to various abilities of speech, reasoning power, physical acts such as caring for oneself), then it follows that the more developed a person is, the more value they have. The consequential inference to draw from this line of reasoning is that it would be more legitimate to kill an 8-year-old (who has yet to develop certain intellectual and

other skills) than a 28-year-old; on the same reasoning that it is more legitimate to kill a fetus than an 8-year-old—or more legitimate to kill a disabled person than one less disabled. Common sense tells us that this is nonsense. People who actually try to implement such principles into ethical theory are seen as deranged at best and socially dangerous at worst.

So the fundamental issue that divides pro-life from pro-abortion is simply this: what is a person? Some people argue that the abortion issue is very complicated and complex. It is, if one defines personhood functionally—but not if one defines personhood by being. Clarity in the definition of personhood brings clarity in the debate. If the fetus is a person (and remember that the fetus is only considered a non-person if one holds some functional view of personhood—which would also seriously jeopardize the life of many other human beings at various stages of development)—then abortion is clearly the unjustifiable act of the taking of a human person's life—which civilized people call by its proper name—murder.

#### **SBJT: How do we handle the issue of abortion in the local church?**

**Chad Owen Brand:** There is no doubt that it can be an incendiary issue. Several years ago I was interim pastor of a fairly new church in South Carolina. The members formed the new congregation after leaving a church they considered to be too liberal. They had put up for some years with an associate pastor who taught a quite radical form of biblical historical revisionism, while regularly seeking redress with the, apparently, more conservative senior pastor, but to no avail. The final straw came when a woman in the church who was the primary teacher to

the youth spoke to the students one night on the subject of abortion. She not only defended abortion on demand, but began her address by telling the youth about her own abortion, which she had had a few years earlier, and commented, "That was no different than spitting out a piece of bad meat." When the conservative members of the church were rebuffed in their appeal to the pastor to rebuke the woman and confront the issue, forty of them took what they considered to be their only recourse—they left the church and formed a new SBC congregation.

Sometimes, though, the shoe is on the other foot. Some of us have found ourselves as pastors or staff members of churches where some of our people are pro-abortion, and where we as the teachers of the church have had to stand up for truth. I pastored a rural church far, far away and long, long ago that contained one of the most curious mixes of old-fashioned and new-fuddled ideas imaginable. They (that is, most of the *key leaders*, though certainly not everyone in the church) were ardent defenders of government subsidies on Angora goat husbandry. The federal government began to subsidize that industry during WWII when it needed the wool for cold-weather military uniforms. But like many other government subsidies, it was still in place nearly a half-century later. Of course, many of the church members had Angoras—but sold them as soon as the subsidy was finally removed. These people were also strong supporters of the Gulf War, and of Janet Reno's incursion into the Branch Davidian compound in Waco. My church members would have fought and died for prayer (and spanking) in the public schools, against the views of all of "them liberals up north." They had no

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compunction about referring to African-Americans with the “N-word,” or about offering their opinion on who *should have* won “The War” (yes, *that* war). At the same time, they revered the leftists in the political sphere, at least the Southern ones. One dear old dying lady told me, “President Clinton is such a good Christian man.” (Do you try gently to convince a church member with a terminal illness that she might be wrong about such a thing, or just smile and let her find out in due course? There’s a Pastoral Care dilemma for you! Fortunately, I don’t teach in that department.) Many of my people were fully amenable to socialized health-care, and (some) to mild reparations for the (“N-word”) minorities (I am not kidding!), and, especially and vocally, most were in favor of a liberal approach to abortion. Some of them were merely anti-pro-life, while others were pro-abortion.

I found all of this a bit bewildering, both from a logical and pastoral point of view. I came to realize that much of the above was actually a sort of ingrained and evolving folk-religion/folk-philosophy that was endemic to that rural community. Two pastors later the church closed its doors and the congregants made their way to various nearby churches, where, no doubt, they found others who shared their folk beliefs. During my mostly enjoyable time there we shared many things in common (the gospel), and were sort of jointly disturbed with each other about much of the rest (ethics).

How does a theologically conservative pastor address sensitive and controversial moral issues in a context that is to some degree hostile to his teaching? Let me give a few words of advice, learned in more places than the churches I have already

mentioned. First, don’t equivocate. If you know that you have church members who are pro-abortion or anti-pro-life, don’t try to be a middle-of-the-roader in order to prevent an argument. I will take up the question of how to handle confrontation momentarily, but I want to urge you first never to sell short your position. Just tell them what you believe the Bible teaches on this issue, and don’t soft-sell your conviction. If you do, you will lose respect, and you will have the even more difficult job, later, of taking a position your church was led to believe was not your own. That will not be easy.

Second, state your convictions in a manner that is as non-confrontational and non-personal as possible. When teaching in your church on the issue of abortion, or other controversial ethical issues, you want to disciple your people into truth. Your final goal is not simply to win the argument or put people “in their place.” So, use language and a style of dialogue that is most suited to firm and gentle persuasion, not rhetorical slash and burn. Save that for debate on an Internet forum, where you can, preferably anonymously, feel free to haul out the *Lexicon of Vituperative and Invective Terminology* to get your point across. But not with your church members.

My third piece of advice is to always base your teachings on Scripture. Go to the relevant biblical texts (some of which you will find discussed in the articles in this issue), and build your position on abortion from the Bible. All of your ethical teaching should be Bible-based, and no less so your teaching on abortion. This is critical, since Baptists and other evangelicals at least claim to be Bible people.

Fourth, I would urge you never to com-

promise your convictions in the interest of pastoral care. I have known pastors who claimed to be pro-life, but who helped women in their churches who were in some kind of desperate situation to obtain abortions, in the interest of continuing ministry and support. While I understand the temptation to do such a thing, I believe that it is morally reprehensible for us to abandon our *convictions* in the interest of *ministry*. (And I don't say that merely clinically—I have “been there.”) We have to take a stand both in the pulpit and in the counseling room. That does not mean, on the other hand, that we abandon *ministry* in the interest of *conviction*. Rather, it means that we find a way to minister within our convictions. I was always under the assumption that this was not only the goal, but that it was also possible to achieve it. It might not be easy in some cases. In fact, it is sometimes the hardest road, and, hence, the less-traveled one, but there are always alternatives to sacrificing one's biblically-founded convictions. One of my extension campus students and his wife just adopted a baby from a woman who became pregnant by someone other than her husband. After working through the difficult reconciliation issues, the woman and her husband agreed that she would carry the baby to term and put it up for adoption. I can't even imagine how hard it would be for a man and woman to wrestle through those nine months. But in years to come, they can take satisfaction from the fact that not only did they not end a life peremptorily, but that they have also given joy to another family that has longed for years to adopt a child.

Fifth, get informed. Read some general books on Christian ethics every year. Scott Rae, John and Paul Feinberg, John

Jefferson Davis, Norman Geisler, David Cook, and others have written very fine evangelical expositions of ethics. Read these books and train yourself to think ethically as a matter of course. Then read the important books on abortion, books by people like Francis Beckwith and Marvin Olasky. Keep your mind freshened on these subjects so that you have information ready to hand out when people ask you questions. They will ask you questions—usually when you least expect it.

Finally, if you are a pastor, use the pulpit to get your point across. While the staple of the preacher ought to be gospel preaching, there is a time and a place for ethical instruction from the pulpit. You might give Wednesday evenings or Sunday evenings for a period of time to teaching on moral issues, including abortion. You might preach on the subject on Sunday morning at an appropriate time, such as the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. Congregations need to know that their pastor and staff are not afraid to deal with these kinds of issues straight up—even on Sunday morning. Some years ago I preached a Sunday morning sermon on youth and sexuality. In the course of the sermon I said that condoms were not enough to protect our children from STDs or pregnancy. A woman made a bee-line for me at the end of the service with a look that would have curdled fresh milk. I knew I was in for it. “I don't ever want to hear the word ‘condom’ in a service here again,” she fumed, with her thirteen-year-old daughter tagging behind her. “Well, if your daughter does not hear it here, where do you think she ought to hear it,” I asked. “At school, of course, where they are supposed to learn about such things!” Indeed! You will undoubtedly get some of that, and you

will also get some who will let you know that they disagree with your conviction that abortion is wrong. But for every one like that, just know that there are two or three others out there who will be grateful, silently or vocally, that you were willing to take on the tough issue from the pulpit, and that you were willing to take a biblical stand on it.

The ministry today is not for the faint of heart. It never has been. It is just that in our day there are some newer issues that make it difficult in newer ways. But if you are among the called, you will find a way to tough it out. Part of toughing it out is dealing with the critical issues of our day, including abortion.