

GOD'S VIEW ON LIFE

You may use the terms, *culture of life* and *culture of death*, in relation to the way you envision things *should* be and the many evils of today's society. The word, *culture*, has various definitions depending on the dictionary. Those who have lived in different countries or even different parts of the same country recognize the differences between their cultures through experience. The most common definition of culture is that it is reflected in art, architecture, literature, music, textiles, and dress and in what we produce and how we work. It is that and much more. The Cambridge dictionary defines culture as "the way of life of a particular people, esp. as shown in their ordinary behavior and habits, their attitudes toward each other, and their moral and religious beliefs."

God is not only the Creator of all life, but the Creator of the culture of life. It reflects in everything He made and the cycles and order He put into the universe and every living thing from vegetation to animals to mankind made in His image. God's culture of life is the way of life for which He created His people, his desires for our ordinary behavior and habits, including how we treat each other because we are in relationship with Him and follow His ways.

God is the Creator of heaven and earth and all life. He made it all and saw that it was not only good, but the crown of his creation, mankind, was very good. Before sin entered the world there was no evidence of human illness or death. There was no fear, no shame, no trauma. Animals didn't attack each other or humans. Clothing wasn't necessary because Adam and Eve were entirely innocent.

After they sinned and were cast from the garden, the culture of death began. But God was still for life and began laying a plan for redemption, a continued culture of life that transcends the fall. It was through the curse God put on the serpent that He initiated His plan to not only bring eternal salvation for humankind but abundant life in the middle of the mess our sin would cause in our world. Descended from Adam and Eve was Jesus the Messiah – the Way, the Truth, and the Life. God's instructions and commandments, His written Word, became our guidebook for living life His way, maintaining the culture of life He designed.

God also commands that we choose life and blessings over death and curses so that we and our descendants may live.⁴⁷ The culture of life is a choice! Though we don't have control of the various cultures around us, we can choose God's culture of life in our hearts and demonstrate its life-giving principles in every place we interact with others. Through Jesus, the law of the Spirit who gives life has set us free from the law of sin and death. God not only commands us to choose life, but we are also *free* to do so!

Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can live and move within this redeemed culture of life successfully. Even though we are prone as humans to fail, to miss the mark, to sin, we have the power to overcome the stink of death (and I do mean stink!) due to our failures on this earth. Death not only stinks, it stings. But part of our culture of life is the reality that death has been swallowed up in victory. We do not see this fully now, but it is spoken as though it is already accomplished. "*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*"⁴⁸

In God's culture of life, He commanded that we do not take a life. We are created in His image – every person born and preborn – and valued as one worth dying for. Not only are we to not take a

life, but Jesus demonstrated that we are to lay down our own lives for others. Never once in the Scriptures is a preborn life given less value than one that is born. The culture of life is one of hope and grace, the redemption and love displayed in the gospel of Jesus Christ that we extend to everyone around us. It is the living out of this gospel in thought, word, and deed. This is the definition as well as the essence and the authenticity of the culture of life to which Paul refers when he speaks of the kingdom. “For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”⁴⁹

We will discuss the culture of death in Section II: Mankind’s Perversion, Class 6, Collateral Damage.

The word “abortion” is not found in the Bible, but God’s view of the sanctity of human life is found in many places and from many angles. Here are just a few. In class we will cover more.

Psalms 139:13,16 *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb... Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

Jeremiah 1:5 *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.*

Jeremiah, in one of his depressive moods, cursing the man who gave his father news of Jeremiah’s birth:

Jeremiah 20:17 *For he did not kill me in the womb, with my mother as my grave.*

Isaiah 44:24 *This is what the Lord says – your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb; I am the Lord, the Maker of all things.*

There is not one instance in the Bible in which God indicates that the life of a preborn child is less valuable than that of one who is born. Jesus, Himself, entered this world as a microscopic blastocyte and lived for nine months in His mother’s womb. He did not suddenly become the human Jesus the moment he was fully born.

IS ABORTION EVER OKAY?

There are certainly some extremely precarious situations in which we may feel that abortion is acceptable in God’s culture of life. But are those from just a worldly standpoint or does God feel the same way? Even many Christians, believe what the world says because we have not thought of them considering His Word and His power available to us. Moreover, the fact remains in each situation, that abortion always takes the life of another human being something we are strictly commanded not to do, other than self-defense when someone is maliciously threatening our own. Looking through Scripture, this fact cannot ever be discounted for followers of Christ. Let’s look at these very difficult situations from the standpoint of God’s culture of life.

Rape and Incest Resulting in Pregnancy

We would all agree that rape and incest are intensely traumatic events. But in the unfortunate circumstance in which pregnancy occurs due to rape or incest, there is now a third party involved—an innocent baby. There are two main points to think about in this situation.

1. As we will discuss in the second section of this course, abortion is an extremely traumatic event, with lifelong complications. However, family or friends of a rape victim will often encourage or even force abortion upon the victim. Often, it is just assumed abortion is “necessary.” The victim herself may choose abortion thinking it will make her feel better about the rape not to carry the baby of the perpetrator. The truth is, ending the life of this other person is not going to lessen the trauma of rape or incest. She now has not one but two traumas to overcome.
2. The life in the womb is a unique person, with unique DNA, just like the rest of us. While the genetic make-up of the baby is half from the perpetrator, it is still half from the victim. End the pregnancy and the woman not only has to deal with the rape/incest trauma but now also with a death, the loss of her very own child by her own choice or sometimes because she feels forced (yet another abuse).

Sadly, I’ve never heard this discussed in a church. There are many redemptive stories of women who have become pregnant by rape who have chosen to carry their babies to term. Emmy Award winner Ryan Scott Bomberger was conceived in rape, yet his courageous mother gave him the gift of life and love. He states, “As I’ve discovered by talking to rape survivors across the country...there is a common thread. Biological mothers often consider children conceived in rape as the only redemption of such a horrific and violent act.”⁵⁰

In rape or incest resulting in pregnancy, God cares equally for the mother and the baby. The baby is no less loved by Him simply because of the circumstances of conception. In the same way, the mother is no less loved by God because she was defiled by rape. God is not only our Creator of life who gave us a culture of life, He is also the Redeemer of our lives and promises to work everything together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

Bad Timing – Abortion as Birth Control

Using abortion as birth control is a relatively new idea since the late ‘50s when the birth control pill was introduced. Having babies suddenly became optional—even in marriage. Married people often take refuge in the same lie that scores of single people do—that having children is a burden and nothing more than a matter of choice.

Plan B One-Step (The Morning-After Pill, Emergency Contraception) is available over the counter. A 12-year-old can buy it without her parents’ knowledge. Coupons can be obtained online. It is not considered abortion by the medical industry that has changed the definition of conception. *Plan B* works by doing one of three things:

1. Stops the ovary from releasing an egg
2. Prevents fertilization of an egg that is released
3. After the egg is fertilized (this is considered true conception), prevents it from attaching to the uterus (which causes a “spontaneous” abortion).

If 1 or 2 (above) occurs, no human life ends. If 3 occurs, then a life is taken. This is an abortion because it happens after conception. The website says that it prevents pregnancy in about seven out of eight women who would have become pregnant without it. The manufacturer says that it is not an abortion pill.⁵¹ Yet we know it does not *prevent* pregnancy if an egg is fertilized, and when this has occurred, it indeed acts as an abortion pill.

The problem is the woman never knows what really happened. Did she end her baby’s life, or did she not? I feel that *Plan B One-Step* is more insidious than other forms of abortion because of this. She will go through the rest of her life never knowing if she ended the life of her own child. If she did end a life, because she never knows for sure, she will never be able to truly grieve the loss of a “possible” baby.

She may experience many of the same mental health consequences as someone who had a surgical abortion, but she is less likely to recognize how these consequences may be related to taking that pill. It comes with a heavy burden that if a woman takes it, it could very well result in the loss of her baby’s life. This cannot be easily brushed off as inconsequential. I know of people who have used this method, and the negative mental health impacts were dramatic.

When you hear that abortion numbers have dropped, don’t believe it! I hear this statement from both pro-choice and pro-life camps. This statement does not account for the unknown number of babies aborted by this method that became available in 1999 by prescription only. In 2006 it became available without a prescription for women 18+, with a prescription needed for minors. In 2009 the over-the-counter age lowered to 17. In 2013 the age was lowered to 15. In 2014 it became available as it is now, over-the-counter for any age.

Other Forms of Birth Control

Any form of birth control that uses hormones can result in abortion. With the IUD, as with *Plan B*, whether abortion can occur is determined by the definition of conception that you use. Most physicians will tell you that an IUD does not cause abortion because that is what the manufacturers tell them based on their definition of fertilization being implantation, which can happen up to two weeks after fertilization. IUD’s rarely prevent conception (fertilization). If the embryo were an “it” and not a “who,” a unique human being in initial development stage, then it would not be an abortion if “it” were expelled.

Fetal Anomalies – Something is Wrong with the Baby

Tests are done nowadays, such as amniocentesis, that can determine if a preborn child has certain conditions like Down Syndrome. Normally abortion is recommended and rarely is a second opinion advised or pursued. These tests are not always reliable. One hundred percent of Down Syndrome babies in Iceland are aborted now. They call this a “cure” for Down Syndrome. About thirty percent of them are aborted in the United States.

We are playing God when we decide if a person is allowed to live or not. Isn’t the Creator of the universe and of all humanity capable of working this for good? Some of the most precious people on earth are those with Down Syndrome. They are usually the kindest, sweetest-hearted people you will ever know. We can learn so much from them. Our value as a human is never based upon our abilities or disabilities. We must be overly cautious about making such judgments. This was one of the reasons for Hitler’s infamy. We start knocking off the weakest of our society and we do not know when we will find ourselves as no longer viable for life.

We must ask ourselves, “Are any of us “perfect””? Do our abilities or disabilities determine the value of life? We all have weaknesses. But it is the challenges of life that build our character. And when the least of the least of us accomplishes something new or great, doesn’t everyone cheer? Nothing else gives such meaning to life! But how many young parents in the church would have already

thought this through before this crisis faces them? How many of them would just take the “medical” advice to abort without a second thought? How many churches would know how to advise them? I love this passage from Exodus I quoted in the Class 1 material where God takes the credit for our defects. (“Is it not I, the Lord?”)⁵²

If a baby is not expected to live past birth, a beautiful option is prenatal hospice. It allows the baby to live until God takes him or her home in His time. The pregnancy continues until labor begins or the baby dies naturally. There is a sense of peace and closure felt by families that highly contrasts the experience of families undergoing abortion for fetal anomalies. Couples who choose abortion in this instance will endure just as many adverse, long-term psychological effects and prolonged grief reactions⁵³ as anyone who has an abortion. Yet, who in our churches knows about such things to be able to come around parents in this most loving manner? Let us be the ones.

Risk to the Mother’s Life

Dr. C. Everett Koop, former United States Surgeon General, stated publicly in the 1980’s that in his thirty years as a pediatric surgeon, he was never aware of a single situation in which a preborn child’s life had to be taken to save the life of the mother. He said the use of this argument to justify abortion, in general, was a “smokescreen.”⁵⁴

In 1967, Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher, former Executive Director of Planned Parenthood at the time, acknowledged, “Today it is possible for almost any patient to be brought through pregnancy alive, unless she suffers from a fatal illness such as cancer or leukemia, and, if so, abortion would be unlikely to prolong, much less save, life.”⁵⁵ That was more than fifty years ago! The statement is much truer today with advances in medicine. There is no guarantee that a continued pregnancy will cause the mother to die, nor that abortion will extend her life.

Abortion within Marriage

Increasingly abortion is used in marriage. Perhaps because it is not good timing as other things in life seem more important. It may be chosen because it feels too expensive to have a child. Some choose abortion to keep their partner (whether married or not), yet the relationship is more likely to end after abortion. Some choose abortion because the relationship is abusive. Regardless of the reason for choosing abortion, the hideous consequences of abortion will follow.