

# 2nd Opinion: Further points to consider when discussing abortion responsibly

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I am not dispassionate about abortion. I hold to a very conservative view of Scripture and the sovereignty of God and thus firmly declare the sanctity of life. I see debates over abortion—such as when one might call a baby a person—as a reprehensible attempt to justify sin and therefore as being non-starters.

[Joshua Sharp](#) encouraged us recently to discuss abortion responsibly, and I affirm the need to speak responsibly. I also agree with him that abortion is not an abstract issue, though I would go further and name abortion a clear evil.

One of the reasons I name abortion a clear evil is because of the overwhelming number of abortions since the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973. With tens of millions of abortions—that we know of—it is unlikely that any family in the United States is unaffected in some way.

The evil that is abortion only begins with the killing of innocent life. Another facet of this evil is the cultural reversal that occurred when our nation declared abortion a right to defend and honor. When culture lies to women, telling them the decision to abort a child is good and honorable, we call evil good.

## A pastoral response to abortion

Our culture and our legal system do not use certain terms in talking about

abortion, terms like evil. When I counsel men and women in my office who have aborted a child, I also do not use certain terms.

Mostly, I listen to the heartache and anguish that grips them and chokes any contentment or joy in life. What I do say is that God loves them. His grace is greater than their need. I invite them to relinquish control and surrender to God's loving embrace.

Evil overcomes all of us in some regard at some point. Even with a world screaming that abortion is good, I've observed the Holy Spirit be very effective at piercing the noise and finding the soft places of the heart. Conviction by the Holy Spirit brings us to our knees and repentance.

When on our knees, we don't need reminders that we chose our actions—we know that all too well. Here, on our knees, the love of God and his forgiveness meet us.

## **Words used to debate abortion**

I want to respond to one of Sharp's key points, that abortion is a "distinctly gendered issue" involving "bodily autonomy." I believe if we are going to discuss abortion responsibly, we need to know the implications of these phrases and how they fall short.

I disagree that abortion is "distinctly gendered." True, only women have abortions, but just as a newborn child impacts a whole family, so does the killing of one.

By claiming abortion is "distinctly gendered," men can be told to get out of the way or to keep their mouths shut because it doesn't involve them. But the men who've come to me overcome by telling a spouse or lover to have an abortion show me that men also are deeply affected.

Appealing to bodily autonomy as a way to declare abortion a women-only

issue—or to justify a choice for abortion—subverts the understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

As Christ followers, we are not autonomous. Scripture tells me that I—as a Christian—belong to Jesus and that all of us—Christian or not—belong to God.

We are not our own masters. Though we do have a will, the call of the gospel is to surrender our wills to God.

With something as significant as abortion, something that affects women *and* men, something that may even affect every family in the United States, I don't think men need to remove themselves from the discussion. This issue impacts everyone, and all Christians must engage in this discourse.

Pastors especially must not cede a voice in the crowd. This issue, for me, is not about sexism but is about holiness. We must preach the demand of Jesus for his people to be holy and righteous and to love his laws and precepts. We must love Jesus more than we love ourselves, or we will never follow him.

## **A personal story about abortion**

In addition to my view of the Bible, I bring personal experience to the matter of abortion.

Sharp, like others, says, “I believe abortion is the killing of an unborn child and should be illegal in most circumstances—*the major exception being when the life of the mother is in danger*” (emphasis mine).

That caveat seems to suggest there is a situation in which wrong actually can be right. Using more forceful language: Evil is now good. I take particular offense to this caveat used to make evil “preferable.”

My wife was pregnant when diagnosed with cancer. The very certain word was that carrying the baby full term meant death for both mother and baby. According to Mr. Sharp, here is a “major exception” to the abortion-is-wrong stance.

We quickly sought a course to ensure a safe delivery for our child, at the expense of what was “best” for my wife. A strong course of steroids boosted my son’s lungs and overall development. This was wonderful for my son but terrible for my wife. As my son grew and thrived on the steroids, so did my wife’s tumor.

When my son developed enough to live outside his mother, the doctor induced delivery and my son was born 9 weeks premature. Today, he is a very strong, smart and capable young man. He is a delight for our family and many others.

Only days after delivery, my wife was a cancer patient in another hospital. Numerous treatments and surgeries gave her nearly a year to nurture and love our new son.

The weeks of delay and the strong course of steroids undeniably affected the probability of her survival. My wife understood this. She also had an unshakable faith. Jesus did not consider his life worth saving; so, how could she? She willingly jeopardized her life so someone else might live.

I can make the argument that my son has life because his mother loved Jesus more than she loved herself. My wife’s sacrifice was able to save just one; the sacrifice of Jesus, however, has the power to save the whole world.

Here is the last entry in my wife’s journal: “Test yourselves to know Christ is in you ... do nothing against the truth ... do no evil ... we are complete in Christ Jesus. No matter what, I am with our beloved Savior and King.”

# A hard saying for a hard action

I long to engage culture with the truth and love of Jesus in such a way that people repent and confess Jesus as Lord. Only then can Jesus heal the hurting.

Why is abortion a difficult and traumatic decision? Why are churches filled with grief and guilt-stricken women—and men—still reeling from an act that might have occurred decades ago? Because they have come to identify what they have done or are contemplating doing as a profound wrong, what I've called evil. That is a very hard saying. I don't deny it.

They need love. They need forgiveness. Only God can give them that. We must speak love and do love, but this does not require that we stop speaking hard truths.

To speak responsibly about abortion means to preach the hard truths about the evil of abortion and love unconditionally those suffering because of abortion, both men and women.

There are certain discussions and decisions a follower of Christ should not need to debate. For me, abortion fits that category. Will I kill an unborn child? No!

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