

# Voices: One Baptist's response to controversial matters

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I am an ordinary Baptist, and I care about the controversies I see Baptists navigate. Today, I see the conflict over abortion and LGBTQ people.

Most of us ordinary Baptists can read the Bible. We have enough translations that we can boil down the most difficult passages into an understandable message. We do not have to worry about clarity.

The word of God is clear enough that its meaning is not in question. How we balance one Scripture against another can be a problem, but not the clear statements and commands of God's word.

As for abortion, yes, God knew us before we were born. He knit us together in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:8). That not only is clear, it is miraculous, beautiful and poetic.

As for LGBTQ people, God created two genders and told them to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:27-28). God told us to keep his plan primary, not go off in other directions and figure out reasons why it is OK if we do.

We live in a fallen world. Science has given us answers, but with more answers have come more questions.

What if a fetus or baby is a clump of cells, as it always has been? Does that change anything?

What if gay people have a hormone bath in the womb that causes them to be unique? Would that be news to God?

However we are made, God understands it all. He had the whole story

before the foundation of this world.

## **My response**

Controversial matters and the way we handle them can do more harm to people than they give help to the “sinner.” Scripture tells us, “Your kindness will reward you, but your cruelty will destroy you” (Proverbs 11:17).

If people ask me to approve abortion or a gay lifestyle, I do not—on the basis of the Bible. Also on the basis of the Bible, I can love people and show them grace.

So many of our problems are not so much about the individual but about our institutions, including government and the church. What laws and rules do we make about sin? Can we even use the word “sin” anymore?

We must decide what the majority wants to do about controversial matters. In this country, neither the church nor any moral group can make laws based on religious positions. We may want to, but we cannot.

We can pray, and we can organize voters and vote our conscience. We can trust God after a decision is made, and find ways to love and support the vulnerable in society, help mothers in poverty and help facilitate adoption. We can ensure human rights are given to all.

Some controversial matters must be judged or handled by God. Matters of the heart, soul, spirit are God’s domain in all of us. Calling our fellow citizens to Christ is what we can and must do. God changes hearts.

God asks us: “Can you take your hand off the controls over others and trust me to handle some matters? Can you love justice and mercy? Can you walk humbly with me in faith?”

*Ruth Cook is an educator assistant for an English-as-a-Second-Language class and is a longtime Texas Baptist. The views expressed are those solely of the author.*