

A Pastor Ponders Abortion

By John McWilliams

The subject of abortion is one that is often very difficult for people to discuss for various reasons. It's a highly charged topic and my goal isn't to upset anyone. My goal is simply to share with you what I have learned over the years. You may agree or disagree with what I have to say, yet what I'll share with you isn't something that came to me in a moment of time. Rather, it has come out of studying and dealing with this subject as a pastor for nearly 40 years. I wish I had all the answers, but let me at least share with you what I can from my experience.

I am certainly aware of the various arguments regarding when life actually begins and that surely is an important conversation.

Without doubt science says that what is inside the mother, even at conception, is certainly alive. Yet what is it? Some maintain that it is just a group of living cells that will later form into a human being, but have yet to become human. Yet, at just over 3 weeks old, the baby has a pulse and lots of other functioning parts.

One thing is for sure. If in fact, life does begin at conception, then the moment after conception, you do have a developing living human being, early in his or her formation as it may be. Therefore, it logically follows that removing that child from the womb through an abortion, is actually stopping the life of a living human being in process.

So if you will, let me share the logic with you behind why I have come to the conclusion that from the moment of conception, what we have is actually a human being in process, at his or her earliest stages of life. As strange as it may seem, it was aviation and training to be a pilot that taught me something very practical about abortion.

See if it makes sense to you. In their training, pilots have to learn to execute what is called an "aborted takeoff." What that means is that until the aircraft is fully off the ground and in the air, a pilot has to be ready, for whatever reason, to stop or abort that takeoff if necessary.

When you look at it, the practical implication of that is that you can't stop or abort something, in this case a takeoff, that hasn't already begun. When you look up the word "abort" in the dictionary, one of the definitions is "to stop something before it is finished." So again, by definition, when you abort something, you are in fact stopping something that has already begun.

Back to aviation. You can only abort a takeoff if the takeoff has already begun. Once you begin what is called the "takeoff roll" down the runway, even though the plane isn't yet off the ground, the takeoff has nonetheless begun. That's why stopping it is called an "aborted takeoff."

On the other hand, if I'm sitting at the end of the taxiway, ready to enter the runway to begin my takeoff roll and I call the tower and tell them that for whatever reason, I would like to return to the gate, that isn't considered an aborted takeoff. Yet once I've been cleared for takeoff and actually take the runway and move that plane even one inch down the runway, the takeoff has started. It is in process. If I then stop that process for whatever reason, I have aborted the takeoff. It doesn't matter whether I'm one inch down the runway or three thousand feet down the runway, if I stop the process, I have aborted the takeoff, because the takeoff began the moment I started the takeoff roll.

So again, the bottom line is that by definition, "Abortion stops something that has already begun." If you apply that analogy to a pregnancy, at the moment of conception, the "takeoff" if you will, or a human life, has started, even though the runway may be nine months long. Even though it's early in the "takeoff," process, nonetheless, it's a human life that has begun. A human being is now in the process of developing and left alone, a human being will be the result of that process. It won't become anything else and to stop or abort that process is to stop or abort something that has already begun, namely a living human being, as early in that human being's life as it may be.

Without trying to be judgmental, I have found that people, including myself before I became a Christian, who argue that what's in a mother's womb at one or two months of pregnancy, isn't a human being yet, often make that argument for selfish reasons. If one can come to the conclusion and be convinced that what is in their womb isn't a human life yet, they can stop it with a clear conscience.

Yet, interestingly enough and it has happened many times, the same couple that chooses to abort what they say is just a fetus and not a baby, after two and a half months of an unwanted pregnancy, will later, during a planned and wanted pregnancy, call what's in the womb, at even one month, their "baby." They will buy clothes for that baby, work on a nursery for that baby, pass out sonogram pictures of that baby and tell people they just found out they are having a baby, even though it's at the exact same stage of the pregnancy when they previously aborted what they said wasn't a baby.

Couples don't say after one month of the pregnancy, "We just found out we're having a fetus." On the contrary, they say "We just found out we're having a baby." The tee shirt the Mom wears with an arrow pointing down to her stomach doesn't say "FETUS," it says "BABY."

So one has to wonder how at two and a half months of pregnancy, a woman with an unwanted pregnancy is only carrying a fetus, a bunch of cells, a non human, but then later that same woman during a wanted pregnancy, at the same two and a half month stage, is now carrying a baby. It sounds harsh, but for many the bottom line is that if you want it, it's a baby. If you don't, it's a fetus or a non human bunch of cells. It's a double standard that people have become convinced actually makes sense. Otherwise they would have to admit they are aborting actual babies.

Perhaps you are aware of some of the amazing double standards that exist in the laws of our country on this subject. For instance, almost half our states, 23 to be exact, have special homicide laws that specifically apply to pregnant women. For instance, if a person shoots a pregnant woman and the baby is lost, under specific state statute, that person will be charged with the murder of an "unborn child."

However, there is a specific exemption which is written into those laws which prevents that law from being applied to persons like surgeons, who are authorized by law to perform abortions. Ironically, those folks cannot be prosecuted under that law for doing the very same thing a shooter might do, namely taking the life of a woman's unborn child. The main difference is that the surgeon has the consent of the mother to take the life of the baby.

And yes, in case you're wondering, a number of those homicide laws specifically state that they apply to any stage of the pregnancy beyond conception. The law in Illinois for example, states the following, "*The law defines 'unborn child' as any individual of the human species from fertilization until birth.*"

So, if I shoot a pregnant woman and take the baby's life that is called murder. On the other hand, if a trained surgeon with surgical tools and with the consent of the mother, cuts that same baby to pieces and sucks it out of her womb, that's called a woman's right to choose and the surgeon remains a respected member of the community.

In the town I live in a man was recently arrested and charged with aggravated animal cruelty, which is a felony, for kicking a bird on a fishing pier that had taken a fish off his fishing line. I personally would never have kicked that bird, nor do I advocate such a thing, but only a few miles away from that spot, babies are regularly ripped from their mother's wombs at a Planned Parenthood facility and nobody is ever arrested or charged with anything. I'd like to suggest that the lives of ten thousand of those birds, which I also see as God's wonderful creatures, would never be equal in value to the life of one precious unborn baby.

The problem here lies in the fact that people have been deceived into concluding that what is in the womb isn't a human being. I'm convinced that the overwhelming majority of people who have abortions, are actually convinced they are not aborting a human being, especially in the earliest stages of the pregnancy. Most people, even with as many issues as they might have going on, still won't willingly take the life of something they feel is an actual human being. That is clearly supported by statistics that show that after seeing a sonogram of their baby, 90% of women who were planning an abortion, change that choice to having their baby.

In my opinion, The Christian Church has to stand up for the most innocent and vulnerable of our population, namely the millions of unborn children in our nation. Yet, at the same time we can't just be *against* something. We also have to be *for* something. We can't just be against abortion. We have to be for things that will make a difference for these women and men contemplating abortion and will save babies.

We also have to be for extending forgiveness to people, who after an abortion, have come to see that what they aborted was indeed a human being and have now begun to deal with the horror and guilt of what they did.

Christians and Churches especially, should be reaching out to these women, as well as to the men who were involved in the choice for an abortion and embrace them in the forgiveness Christ has given us and also offers to them.

As a result of becoming Christians, thousands of women have also come to see that their previous abortions were a horrible thing to have done and these women pay a heavy price in guilt and brokenness. We Christians must be there for them. We must reach out to these women and minister to them and love them through the guilt and the shame, bringing them into the forgiveness and restoration only Christ can provide.

Something else we have to be actively in favor of and encourage, is finding workable alternatives to abortion that actually save the lives of the unborn. By that I mean that we have to be able to tell a woman with an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy, that if she feels she's unable to raise her child, her baby can and will be placed in a Christian home for adoption if that's what she would like to see happen. Because of a ministry called Bethany Christian Services, that is a promise you and I can make to any woman at any time.

Bethany Christian Services is one of the largest adoption agencies in the country. It is fully Christian and they openly guarantee that if a mother, for whatever reason, has chosen to give birth to her baby, and would choose that her baby be placed for adoption with Christian parents in a Christian home, they will make that happen. It's really that simple and their record proves it. By the way, this also includes babies who were conceived through rape and even incest.

What's more, Bethany Christian Services will lovingly work with the mother from day one to love her throughout the process and give her a detailed look at all available choices, including looking at ways she might even choose to keep and parent the child herself, if that is what she ultimately determines is best.

What that means is that you and I can actually tell a person with an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy, that if they will choose adoption over abortion, Bethany Christian Services will lovingly work with them and will place their baby with Christian parents in a Christian home. I previously served on the board of a regional office of this ministry and I've seen what they do first hand. It is simply amazing. Their website is WWW.Bethany.org and what they provide is in fact an incredibly viable alternative to abortion that really works and it's free.

So to sum it all up, in my opinion, babies are babies from conception. As I said, you simply can't abort something that hasn't already begun. Therefore, stopping that process through abortion is taking a human life and that's wrong, especially if a ministry like Bethany Christian Services exists and will promise a good adoption plan, in spite of whatever the circumstances of the pregnancy happen to be.

There is however, one situation that merits some clarification. Somewhat rarely, a situation arises during the pregnancy, where it is determined that either the mother's life or the baby's life or possibly both lives will be lost unless something is done. At that point, it must be determined what kind of efforts will be employed and whether they will primarily focus on saving the mother and baby or just one of them. Certainly from the outset, everything possible should be done to save both the mother and baby. However, if it is determined that only one can be saved, a choice has to be made regarding which one it will be. In my opinion, that choice is up to the parents alone. If the choice is for the baby, everything should be done to save the baby's life. On the other hand, if it is determined that the mother's life is to be saved, everything should focus on saving her life.

However, if it is the mother who will be saved, that doesn't mean that the baby's life necessarily should be actively taken to make that happen. In fact it can be successfully argued that it is never necessary to actively take the baby's life to save the mother's. It may happen that in order to save the mother's life the baby has to be delivered at a time when the baby may still be considered unviable. However, if a baby is delivered prematurely to save the mother, that isn't an abortion and once the baby is delivered, everything could then be done to save the baby too. Nonetheless, if in an effort to save the mother, the baby is delivered and fails to survive, that isn't an abortion. It's simply the outcome of determining to save the mother's life. Some people certainly may disagree with such a choice and say that the baby's life should always have the top priority, but in my opinion, that choice must be left up to the parents. If the mother is lost because she had ordered that the primary efforts be made to save the baby, it is her choice to give her life for her baby. Thankfully, the number of such problem pregnancies is extremely low.

Also, there are surgeons who will tell women who have ectopic pregnancies that the baby must be taken to save the mother. These days that isn't accurate. Ectopic babies have been successfully transplanted from the fallopian tubes into the womb resulting in normal and healthy births. Yet, again, if a transplant is attempted and the baby is lost, that isn't an abortion. It is the result of trying to save the mother. So, one has to be ready to say "no" to advice from surgeons who might mean well, but who are uninformed about what can actually be done to save both the mother and child in the case of an ectopic pregnancy.

Let me conclude by saying again that none of us is perfect. So even though I feel Christians should be against abortion, people do make mistakes. For various reasons they later come to see abortion as a terrible mistake. If that is you or someone in your family or someone among your friends, getting Christian counseling through a pastor and a solid Biblical congregation is vital. I can promise you one thing. Jesus will forgive you. He will love you and He will carry you through what can be a rough time. He can even bring you to the point where He can use you in very concrete ways to minister to and be a blessing to others who may be considering abortion as their only option.

Wherever you are when it comes to this important subject, may God bless you as you continue to seek out His Will for you and those you love.

Biography for Pastor John McWilliams.

Pastor John McWilliams is a graduate of Rowan University with a degree in teaching and Princeton Seminary where he earned an M. Div. degree with a concentration in preaching. He pastored two congregations in New Hampshire and on Long Island for a total of 21 years. In 1998 he felt God calling him into mission work full time and joined the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ. He was with them for 14 years and is now with International Biblical Training in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

His main focus has been that of training pastors, Christian leaders and laypeople in various part of the world as well as in the United States. He had traveled to Russia and Costa Rica numerous times to teach, preach, minister and train pastors and Christian leaders. He has also done the same in Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, The Bahamas and most recently Cuba. On one special trip he ministered to the indigenous Guaymi Indian Tribes in the Panamanian jungle. He was the first U. S. pastor ever invited to preach and teach among these tribes.

He has also regularly traveled throughout the United States, teaching and preaching in various congregations. A number of his training seminars have been translated into Persian/Farsi and broadcast into closed countries in the Middle East for pastors and Christian leaders there.

He is the author of numerous published articles and also a number of hymns and songs. He also produced a Christian video to be used by Christians as an evangelical tool. It's called "**The Medal of Honor: Robert Maxwell's Story.**" In it he interviews

Robert Maxwell, who is our nation's oldest living recipient of The Congressional Medal of Honor. Bob threw himself on a live German hand grenade in Southern France, absorbing the explosion and saving three of his fellow soldiers. He has a great story of faith and courage to tell.

Pastor John's first book, "*Balancing Your Faith*" is now available. You can get it in soft cover or download it to your favorite device. Just go to WWW.Jbmcw.com to order your copy.

Pastor John is married to Barbara, who is an Art and Bible teacher at Naples Christian Academy in Naples, Florida. They have 3 grown children, one grandson and one grandson on the way.