

# Theology for Life

Volume 2 | Issue 4 | Winter 2015-2016

## *Standing for Life in a Culture of Death*



### **Inside this Issue...**

- ***Providing Hope and Healing with Lifeline Pregnancy Care Center— An Author Interview***
- ***Helping Adoptive Parents***
- ***After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption— A Book Review***



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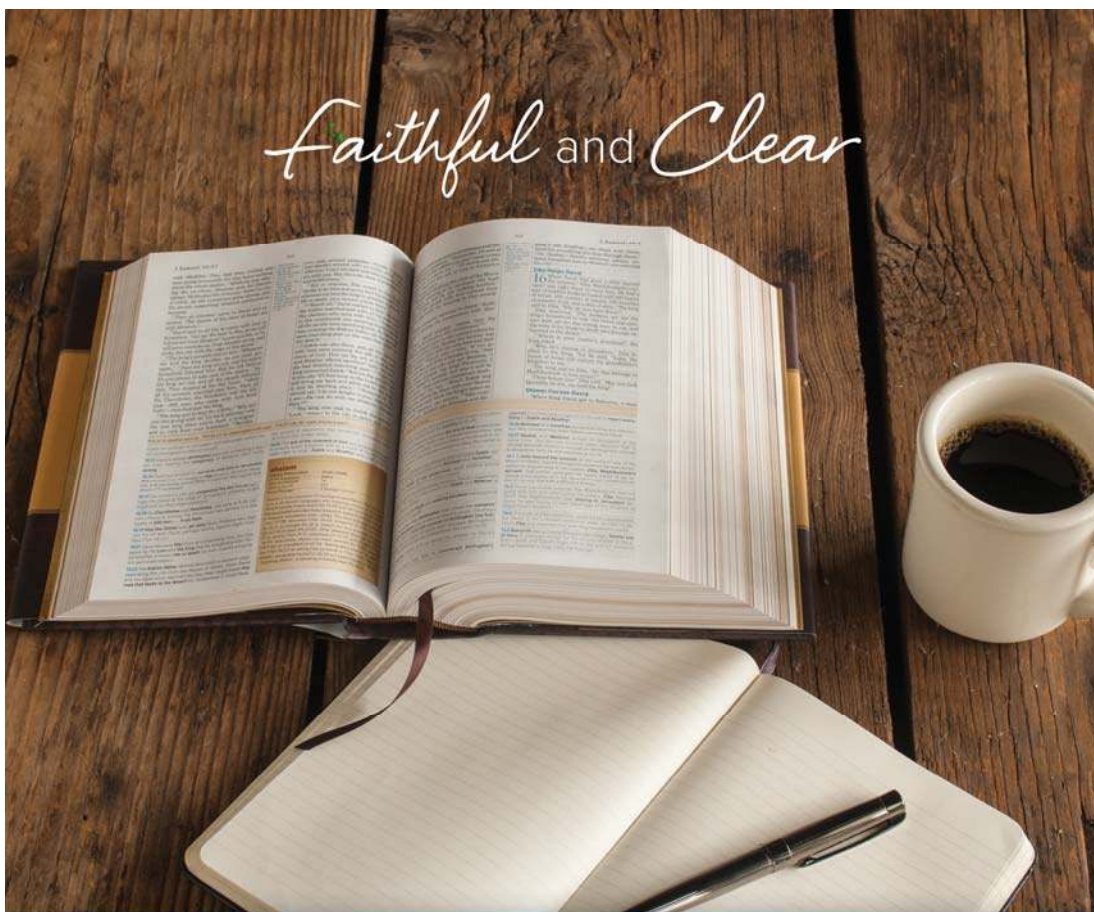
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## Editor's Corner

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Few issues are as volatile and as least understood as the issue of abortion. People today on the pro-choice side of the debate make two arguments. The first is that they are autonomous individuals, therefore, able to make choices that only impact their own lives. This view has many problems with it, but the second viewpoint, the emotional argument, is even more prevalent on this issue. In both views, people argue they have a choice to choose what is best for them. What this viewpoint fails to consider is that *choices have consequences*. When a woman has an abortion, she is consciously choosing to end the life of an innocent defenseless child so that her life may be “better” by allowing her more freedom, without the responsibility of having a child.

In the midst of cultural confusion on abortion to date, ten Planned Parenthood videos have been released. These videos have exposed the evil of the pro-choice agenda, US tax-funder backed organization Planned Parenthood. These videos display the horror of baby parts being sold for a lot of money, all for the purpose of profiting off a woman’s “right to choose”.

The issue of abortion is an explosive one for many people. I grew up in the Seattle, Washington area, a city in Washington that is known for being *very* politically liberal. In this context, I learned to listen, ask questions, and deal with objections to the biblical understanding of life and biblical Christianity. Behind the positions that people hold to are individuals created in the image and likeness of God. This means that we see people’s statements, not as an argument to be debated and engaged in only, but as beliefs of people worthy of dignity and respect. We see them as people worthy of engagement with biblical truth

and with the gospel for the purpose of seeing God transform their thoughts and lives with His Word and gospel so that they might become wholly His.

In the midst of the current cultural chaos on abortion is the adoption movement. J.I. Packer once said about adoption, “Our first point about adoption is that it is the highest privilege that the gospel offers” (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 206). Scripture backs Packer’s assessment of adoption as seen in passages like Romans 8:15-17 (cf. Galatians 4:4-7), in which Paul emphasizes the closeness, affection, and generosity that comes to us when, through justification, God makes us His children. As adopted children, we call God “*Abba*”, the Aramaic word for “father” or “daddy”, and the term Jesus Himself used to address Him (Mark 14:36). Through adoption, we also experience great generosity as we become “heirs of God and fellow heirs of Christ”, which means we become the heirs and owners of all things (Hebrews 1:2; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

J. I. Packer goes on in *Knowing God* to explain how adoption must be the framework through which we view and live the rest of the Christian lives. Yes, it really is that important and that essential to the Christian life. 1 John 3:1, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” Praise God for that!

In this issue, you’ll read clear, biblical, moral, ethical, and practical teaching on abortion, but more than this you’ll learn reasons why abortion is wrong, and what to do about it. You’ll also learn from some leading thinkers, writers, and speakers about the adoption movement, how you can pray for them, and support the great work God is doing in this movement.

I’m excited for you to read this issue and believe the Lord will use it in your life to challenge you, convict you, strengthen your faith, and equip you to serve Him.

In Christ Alone,

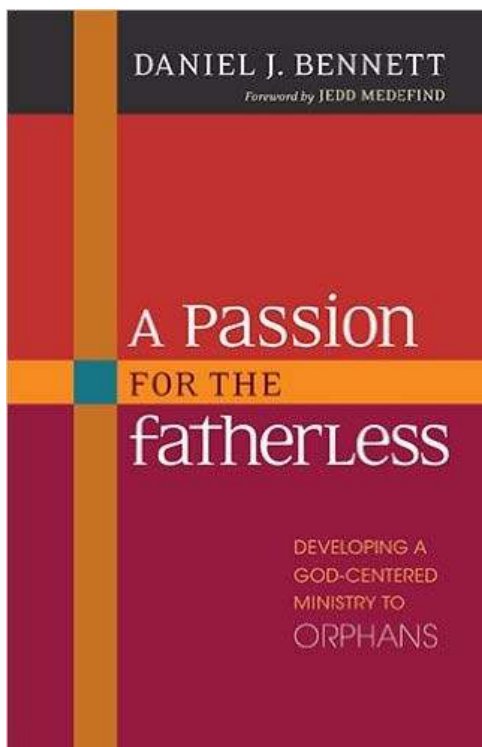
Dave Jenkins

Executive Editor, *Theology for Life*

## A Book Review:

### ***A Passion for the Fatherless: Developing a God-Centered Ministry to Orphans***

By Craig Hurst



**While adoption has been going on for a long time in the past few years** it has enjoyed a recent spike in attention within Evangelical circles. The accompanying wave of recent books on adoption has been good for both adoptive parents-to-be and families, as well as the children whom they adopt. Parents can be better equipped and children can be better cared for with their varying needs due to this current trend.

In 2011 Daniel J. Bennett wrote *A Passion for the Fatherless: Developing a God-Centered Ministry to Orphans*. Now, in its 2nd printing, the book seeks to provide a robust theology of adoption, along with many practical applications, specifically as it pertains to families considering adoption and churches having adoption ministries. Bennett writes from the per-

spective and heart of a pastor and adoptive father. This enables him to write in such a way as to reach ministry leaders and adoptive families.

Being an adoptive father myself, I have read numerous books on adoption by both secular and Christian authors. While all of these



books have their benefits, there are several reasons why [\*A Passion for the Fatherless\*](#) is the best book on adoption that I have read yet.

First, Bennett's book has some of the best theology of adoption in print. He examines aspects of adoption that other books simply do not saying, "What makes a Christian orphan ministry unique is its focus on the glory of God." (37) He continues, "Our primary desire for orphans is to see them burst forth in worship of God." (53) While acknowledging

"If we properly root our theology of adoption in the adoption we receive in salvation, then we will come out with the same thoughts towards adoption."

that many non-Christians adopt, he stresses that they do not do so for the purpose of seeing God glorified in the process and the life of the adopted child. *It is because of what the gospel has done for us that we adopt and it is for what the gospel can do for the orphan that we adopt.* On page after page, Bennett dives into Scripture

and applies it to adoption. He draws attention to the compassion of God for the orphan as the source of our compassion. He explores the aspects of suffering, reliance on God, good and bad reasons for adopting, the role of the family and the church in adoption, and wise decision making an adoption.

**Second, Bennett rightly roots the *logic* for adoption, especially international adoption,** within the Great Commission. "Both proclaim the gospel." (91) This is one thing I keep returning to in my mind every time someone asks me why we adopted internationally and not domestically (in the USA). The answer is the same one we give for overseas missions—because the spread of the gospel calls us to it. When we take the gospel to the world, we bring their needs back home with us. God is color blind when it comes to evangelism, as well as when it comes to adoption. Through our salvation, God adopts people from every tongue, tribe, and nation into His family. If we properly root our theology of adoption in the adoption we receive in salvation, then we will come out with the same thoughts towards adoption.

Third, Bennett brings to the forefront the reality of suffering that is involved in adoption. While it is good to talk about the joys, blessings,

and rewards of adoption, there needs to be more discussion on the suffering and heartache in adoption. We need discussion on the suffering of the orphan, as well as discussion on the suffering experienced by families who do adopt. That's right, there is suffering on both sides of adoption. It is the reality of loving anyone, especially those who have had to live for years without a loving father and/or mother. Just like a spouse who brings baggage into a marriage, orphans come into your home with baggage that will take years to unpack.

**Bennett points out that it is our “worship of the idol of ease [that] prevents us from caring for the orphan.” (115)** For

“When you adopt you bring suffering and hardship into your family for the sake of giving life to another. This is what God did for us in Christ.”

Americans who believe they need to give their kids everything, buy them a new car when they go to college, give them an extravagant wedding, take expensive family vacations, and subject them to as little suffering and hardship as possible, they will have a very hard time being convinced that they should consider adoption. But adoption involves suffering. This is no less than what Christ did for us on the cross. He suffered that we would live in Him. When you adopt you bring suffering and hardship into your family for the sake of giving life to another. This is what God did for us in Christ.

**Finally, Bennett gives great detailed advice on the aspects of an orphan ministry for your church.** Here is one place where his role as a pastor shines. He discusses how to approach your church with the ministry idea, how to use parachurch ministries, and how to structure the ministry itself. There are several helpful outlines of forms for churches and prospective adoptive parents to use for things like applying for aid and figuring out the projected costs of adoption. I have filled out many of these myself and Bennett's content is up to date.

*A Passion for the Fatherless* is the best book I know of for prospective adoptive families and churches looking to start an orphan ministry in their church. The theology is rich and deep and the application

is real and relevant. The end of each chapter has a complete study guide to lead a group through the book. Bennett gets adoption—his teaching is rooted in the gospel and the role of the family and church in adoption. I cannot recommend this book enough.

## **Providing Hope and Healing with Lifeline Pregnancy Care Center**

### **An Interview with Executive Director Rick Hogaboam**

**By Dave Jenkins**



*Rick Hogaboam is a Christian, husband to Mimi, and father to five: Cody, Kira, Lexi, Zoey, and Ezra. Since 2008, he has served as the Senior Pastor of Sovereign Grace Fellowship in Nampa, Idaho and recently (2014) as the Executive Director of Lifeline Pregnancy Care Center in Nampa, Idaho.*

**T4L:** Thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview with Theology for Life Magazine, Pastor

Rick. Can you tell us a bit about yourself, including the current ministries you are involved in?

**Rick:** I'm married to a tremendous woman and blessed to be a father to five children. I was born and raised in Torrance, CA, but have bounced around various cities in California, a move to New York, and now minister in Nampa, Idaho. I've served as the senior pastor at Sovereign Grace

Fellowship since 2008 and as an executive director at Lifeline Pregnancy Care Center since 2014.

**T4L:** It must be a blessing to work at Lifeline Pregnancy Care Center. As someone who deals with the reality of pregnancy on a regular basis, how do you think the Church can speak to a post-Christian society about the biblical moral absolutes on abortion and adoption?

**Rick:** Great question. I've thought a lot about this and have addressed this very question on several occasions, so this is certainly a common inquiry and worthy of careful consideration. I think that we can look to the pre-Christian witness of the church in the Greco-Roman context and learn quite a bit about how to engage our current cultural context. Christians were a peculiar people in that day for several reasons: theologically, socially, and neighborly

engagement. It was their charitable witness, based on an ethic of sacrificial love, which really caused people to scratch their heads and even at times assign ill motives to

“Materialistic anthropology also perpetrates a view that humans are at the core physical entities, which also contributes to a diminishing of human value.”

the Christians. Christians would help the poor and the sick. It made no sense then why the powerful, healthy, and strong would give of themselves for the outcasts, sick, and weak. We deal with the same devaluation of human life today when intrinsic value cedes more and more to a utilitarian model that values only those with capacities. Materialistic anthropology also perpetrates a view that humans are at the core physical entities, which also contributes to a diminishing of human value. But Christians cared for the outcasts and, quite literally, would save babies that were cast out to the dumps and ditches. Christian families would save these babies and adopt them into their own families. What they said, and what we need to say today, is that human life is precious, deserving of life and protection from womb to tomb. We also believe that human flourishing is best realized when every child is joyfully received

by a loving father and mother. More than just saying, the church throughout the centuries has been engaged in the doing, in the founding of hospitals, orphanages, schools, adoption, and, in the modern context, the founding of pregnancy resource centers to assist men and women facing an unplanned pregnancy.

**T4L:** What kinds of assistance is available for women who have already had an abortion?

**Rick:** At Lifeline, and most pregnancy resource centers, we offer post-abortion care through gospel-centered studies designed to convey the assurance and healing God offers to every hurting soul who's experienced the devastating consequences of sin. While we're all culpable for our own sin, the abortion issue is quite complex in that many women often choose to abort their babies under the pressure of their partner and/or families; there's often resentment and anger that accompany the guilt and shame one feels in such circumstances. But the gospel is big enough to deal with all of this, glory be to God!

**T4L:** Glory be to God, indeed! Are there any encouraging trends you see in the current adoption movement, as well as in the pro-life movement?

**Rick:** I think the most encouraging trends from the legislative side of things, which isn't the mission of pregnancy resource centers, to be clear, is that many states have enacted more and more laws to protect the unborn. From the judicial standpoint, the legislation at the state level will continue to prompt adjudicating through the courts. It'll be interesting to see how that will all play out. While I keep an eye on things politically, the most encouraging signs, I firmly believe, has occurred through the social witness of the church in charity and adoption. Regardless of the legal battle over abortion, we will also be dealing with unplanned, crisis pregnancies in our communities. We can't just vote pro-life and then turn a blind eye to the needs around us. Again, this is how the early church gained credibility and transformed the culture, through



their compassionate care for those in need. This isn't to demean political engagement so much as an encouragement that Christians loving their neighbors always glorifies God, even when the early church had no political clout and when the Christians in the modern context feel marginalized more and more. This marginalizing has prompted the questions you

ask. But the future is bright. God's kingdom is advanced through the cruciform witness of the church. Crucifixion looked like a loss, but it was the pathway to victory. So, also, our deeds of mercy serve the infinite purposes of God, even if they appear

weak and inconsequential in the moment. So, the positive trend is that we've done some reassessment of what our social witness should look like, and the fruit of this is a revived commitment to deeds of mercy. The holistic concern for the plight of humans has also broadened our engagement in healthy ways: we care about abortion, poverty, human-trafficking, and end of life care. The more and more we're consistent in treating all human life with dignity helps the cause for life.

**T4L:** It's good to hear that there are ministries aimed at a holistic approach. Are there support groups that help women who decide to keep their babies?

**Rick:** In the context of the church, there's a growing ministry called *Embrace Grace* that I've been impressed with (<http://embracegrace.com>).

**T4L:** Why should the church be interested in this ministry? How can we help and/or become involved?

**Rick:** The church can often feel intimidated by larger churches than have lots of specialization ministries for people work through particular sin and life issues. While not denigrating such ministries, I want to encourage the smaller churches that they can effectively minister to wom-

en facing an unplanned pregnancy if they cultivate a culture of grace. I don't mean to suggest that a church should ignore sin issues but that the culture of restoration and grace are so prominent that someone who's made a mistake and is in need of support wouldn't hesitate to open up about their needs. Ideally, the older women in the church can come alongside the younger women and help lead them. Men in the church can step up and play a paternal role in the life of a fatherless child.

**T4L:** So as active members in the Church body, what are some ways that Christians can individually be involved in helping their local Lifeline Pregnancy Centers?

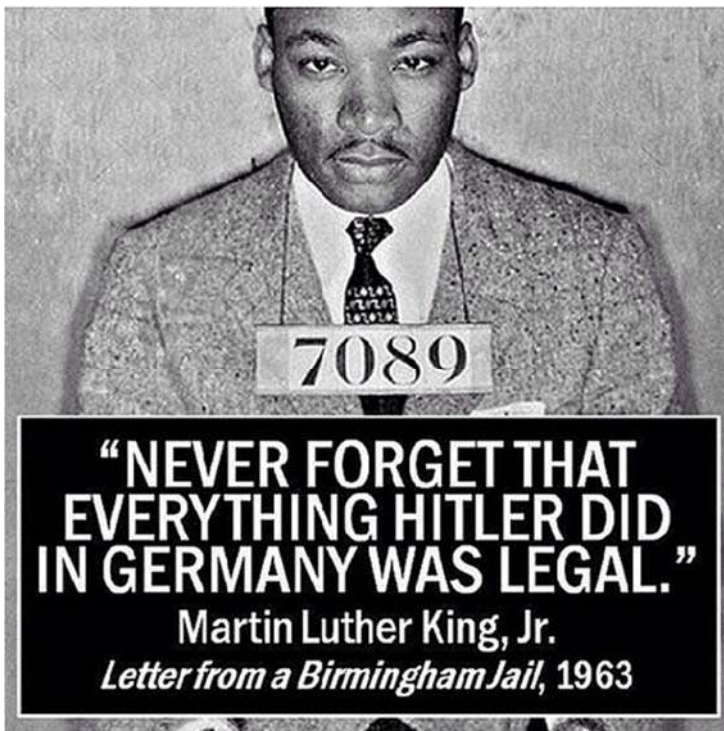
**Rick:** Prayer is number one. Centers also need financial partners. Centers also often rely on volunteer labor, so that can be an option. The best thing to do is contact a local pregnancy center and ask how to help. Thanks, Dave, for the great questions. I also want to add that this issue of life and compassion are really personal for my family. My wife Mimi had Cody, my stepson, after an unplanned pregnancy while still a student in high school. She received the loving support of local Christians, which proved instrumental in her own conversion to Jesus. Cody also has Down Syndrome. Sadly, many Down Syndrome babies don't see the light of day as they're normally aborted. This is sad. Cody is a blessing to everyone who knows him. Also, Mimi went on to graduate high school and went on to graduate from college, all as a single mom. There's a false narrative out there that tells such young women that they must choose between their personal goals and the baby. Women who abort are branded by some as being heroic for their independence. I say that true heroism is seen when parents embrace their children and their dream, in fact embrace their children as part of their dream. And Cody is a precious image-bearer of God, even if his capacities are more limited in certain regards. Cody has the capacity to love,

which is also the greatest gift God gives us. And for me, I was born to parents who weren't married, and grew up most of my life in a single parent family with my dad. It doesn't take rocket science to realize that many babies conceived in such circumstances in the 70's never saw the light of day. My parents didn't choose the expedient route. A lot of people today also propagate a narrative that if you can't give your baby the life they deserve, it would be better to abort and wait for a better time. It's thought that the challenges of a broken home would be so detrimental for the child, it's best to not bring them into the world. Well, I'll be the first to admit that growing up in a broken family was challenging in many ways but not once did I wish myself dead. Not only was my life preserved, but I'm married with children, who would also not be here today if I was aborted. And to think of possible grandchildren and great grandchildren, and on and on, who wouldn't exist if I was aborted. When a baby is saved, an entire legacy might be saved as well. I'm thankful for my life, for Mimi's choice to have Cody, for Mimi coming to Christ, for our marriage, and for our children. This life matter really is a big deal because it more specifically affects our identity as a family. I'm thankful, most of all, for a Savior who came to give us abundant life through His sacrificial atonement. He laid down His life for us, the strong for the weak.

**T4L:** That's a beautiful story, and I hope our readers will be as touched and motivated as Mimi and others like her have been. Your personal testimony on this subject has been very eye-opening. Thank you so much for taking the time to let us interview you, Rick. We look forward to speaking with you again soon!

## Abortion as a Form of Discrimination: Why It Ought to Be Unthinkable

By Matt Perman



**The purpose of this article is to argue that the unborn, from the moment of conception,** have a right to life that is on the same level as infants, children, and adults. An induced [abortion \[1\]](#) at any stage, therefore, is a form of discrimination that ought to be simply as unthinkable to our society as slavery and genocide. Indeed, our society's permissiveness toward abortion is nothing short of hypocritical when placed next to its passion for "political correctness".

In a society where so many run eagerly to show sensitivity towards the "rights" of nearly every special interest group, no matter how extreme, it is unconscionable that the rights of the weakest and most defenseless among us are revoked in the name of "choice" more than one million times a year. [\[2\]](#)

The discrimination inherent in abortion may be termed *natalism*. As philosopher and ethicist Francis Beckwith explains, *natalism* is "the denial of the fundamental human right to life to a segment of human beings

simply because they are not post-uterine.”[\[3\]](#) *Natalism* is a form of prejudice that is even worse than its counterparts of racism, ethnocentrism, and sexism because the end result is almost always the death of its victims:

*Just as skin color (racism), ethnic origin (ethnocentrism), gender (sexism), national power (imperialism), and birth date (ageism) are irrelevant to one’s possession of fundamental human rights, so is one’s degree of development and location inside or outside the womb (natalism). Unfortunately, this politically correct prejudice, manifested in the practice of abortion, nearly always results in the death of its victim.*[\[4\]](#)

Our argument that *natalism* ought to be unthinkable in our society will proceed in two steps. First, we will argue that whether the unborn have a right to life on the same level with all who are post-uterine is completely settled on the basis of one question: Are the unborn human persons? Second, we will argue that, from the moment of conception, the unborn are indeed human persons—and therefore in possession of a right to life equal to that of all other people.

“Just as skin color (racism), ethnic origin (ethnocentrism), gender (sexism), national power (imperialism), and birth date (ageism) are irrelevant to one’s possession of fundamental human rights, so is one’s degree of development and location inside or outside the womb (natalism).”

## **The Significance of Human Personhood**

Scott Klusendorf, Director of Bioethics at the Christian apologetics ministry [Stand to Reason](#), recounts how whenever his young children ask him, “Daddy, can I kill this?” there is one question that needs to be asked in return: “What is it?” There are some things that it is appropriate to kill—black widows, flies, worms, and so forth. And there are some things that it is not appropriate to kill. It all depends upon the nature of the organism.

## **The Dignity of Human Beings**

Nearly everyone acknowledges that there is special dignity and

worth intrinsic to human beings. This dignity and worth includes the right to life. All human beings have this right, simply by virtue of their being human. Formally, this is reflected in one of the great documents of the American political tradition, the *Declaration of Independence*: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”<sup>[5]</sup> Biblically, this is most clearly seen in the sixth commandment: “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13).

Do the unborn possess this right to life? The answer, as we can now see, depends upon whether or not they are human beings. If all human beings are indeed equal and equally in possession of the right to life, as our nation has historically affirmed, then if the unborn are hu-

“...human beings who are just as fully human as you or I, as fully human and fully equal as black people and white people, as men and women— then their right to life is obvious and its destruction out to be unthinkable to all.”

man beings, then they also *fully and equally* have the right to life. There can be no question of “the rights of the mother” outweighing “the rights of the unborn,” for all human beings are equal. Such a scenario would be akin to “the rights of whites” outweighing “the rights of black people.” We would have a situation where everyone is equal, “but some are more equal than others.”<sup>[6]</sup>

### Human, or a Human Person?

The most predominant strain of pro-choice argumentation holds that the unborn are human, but not human *persons*. They are *potential persons*. As I will argue in part two, this dualism is wholly incorrect.<sup>[7]</sup> To be a human being is to be a human person, and it is false to create a category of human beings that are not also human persons. However, the distinction between what is *human* and what is a *human person* is neither wholly arbitrary nor irrelevant to the abortion debate. For there are indeed things that are “human” but not “human persons” (and hence not in possession of rights). Human hair, for example, is human, but it does not have any rights. I can cut my hair at any time and have done no wrong. Likewise, human blood is both living and “human,” but



not in possession of any rights. I might have my blood drawn for lab work, and then disposed of, and no wrong has been committed. The right to life, then, is possessed not simply by virtue of being a piece of “human material”, but by virtue of being a *human individual*. Perhaps it should be obvious to all that the unborn are human individuals, not simply matter that belongs to a human. But it apparently is not. Thus, I fully acknowledge the need to demonstrate the human individuality, the human “being-ness” (or, in other words, the personhood), of the unborn. If the unborn are simply human matter, then their right to life is not nearly as clear. But if the unborn are not analogous to hair and blood, but are in fact full human persons—by which I simply mean human individuals, that is, human beings who are just as fully human as you or I, as fully human and fully equal as black people and white people, as men and women—then their right to life is obvious and its destruction ought to be unthinkable to all. Abortion then becomes a civil rights issue. The trampling upon the rights of the unborn becomes just as abhorrent as was the trampling upon the rights of people in the institution of slavery, [\[8\]](#) or in the Holocaust.[\[9\]](#) Like slavery and genocide, abortion would be unthinkable.

### Personhood and the Constitution

Further, the question of personhood would also settle the debate about whether abortion should continue being legal, for we read in the fifth amendment that “no *person* shall [...] be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law”, and in the fourteenth amendment that no state (or other government institute) shall “deprive any *person* of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any *person* within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” Indeed, the centrality of personhood to the debate is acknowledged in the decision of *Roe v. Wade* itself: “If this suggestion of personhood is established, the appellant’s case, of course, collapses, for the fetus’ right to life is then guaranteed specifically by the [Fourteenth] Amendment.”[\[10\]](#)

### Personhood and Arguments for Abortion Rights

The fact that the issue of *personhood* settles so clearly and definitively the question of whether a civilized society should be willing to tolerate the thought of permitting abortion can be demonstrated by examining some key pro-choice arguments.

***The right to privacy.*** This was the main factor in the Supreme Court's decision to legalize abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. What right does the government have to tell a woman what she may and may not do concerning an issue as personal and private as her reproductive decisions?

The concern of this argument to keep government from overextending its authority ought to be appreciated. However, the fundamental purpose of government is not only to protect our freedom, but to protect life (see Romans 13:1-7).<sup>[11]</sup> We are not, and should not be permitted, to make "private" decisions that harm others and violate their rights. For example, all would acknowledge that [REDACTED] it is wrong to torture innocent children, propagate incest, or commit murder "in private". The reason is that these things, regardless of the "privacy" issues involved, injure and harm other human persons. The "right to privacy," therefore, does not justify the permitting of abortions— [REDACTED] unless we are already assuming that the unborn is not a person.

"Any who agree with the government's decision to make certain drugs illegal, such as cocaine and heroin, are implicitly acknowledging this."

***A woman's right to do what she wants with her body.*** This argument is similar to the right to privacy, with the difference that in this case the *fetus* is viewed not simply as something in the woman's body, but as a part of the woman's body. Again, we *should* be against the unjust intrusion of the government into decisions about our own bodies. But there are certain instances when we acknowledge limitations even of this right. Any who agree with the government's decision to make certain drugs illegal, such as cocaine and heroin, are implicitly acknowledging this.

The most significant problem with this argument, however, is that it wrongly assumes that the fetus is a part of the woman's body. In actuality, it is not. For it has its own genetic code and distinct principle of

existence. If it were a part of the woman's body, then it would mean that once the heart had formed (a primitive heart begins beating by the third week), the woman would have two hearts; once the eyes had formed (which begins in the third week), that she would have four eyes; and once the sexual organs have formed (which is by the ninth week), [12] that she has two sets of sexual organs—a disconcerting thing to consider, to say the least, if the fetus is male. The fetus is a distinct organism, not an extension of the mother. Hence, the issue is not whether a woman has the right to do what she wants with her body. If the fetus is a distinct human individual, then the issue is whether she has the right to do what she wants *with someone else's body*. [13]

**The “back-alley” argument.** It is sometimes argued that women will have abortions anyway, whether it is legal or not. Further, if it is illegal they will be having these abortions in far more dangerous environments, likely by unqualified individuals, who will thus be putting the women's lives in significant danger.

The initial appeal of this argument, again, is understandable. Who wants to see women bleeding to death in back alleys? But, on the other hand, who wants to see the defenseless, voiceless, most helpless members of our society dying either? The issue still comes down to whether the unborn are human persons. If they *are* persons, the danger of making it illegal to kill them is not a reason to permit their murder. As the Christian Apologist, Greg Koukl, has argued, “Why should the law be faulted for making it more risky for anyone to kill another innocent person? The fact that bank robbery is dangerous to the felon doesn't seem to be a good reason to make grand larceny legal.” [14]

It should also be noted that the numbers of women who died through illegal abortions has been grossly distorted. Bernard Nathanson, one of the original leaders of the pro-choice movement, writes: *How many deaths were we talking about when abortion was illegal? In N.A.R.A.L. we generally emphasized the drama of the individual case, not the mass statistics, but when we spoke of the latter it was always ‘5,000 to 10,000 deaths a year.’ I confess that I knew the figures were totally false.* [15] In actuality, “according to the U.S. Bureau of Vital Statistics, 39 women died from illegal abortions the year before *Roe v. Wade*,

1972.”[\[16\]](#)

**“If you don’t agree with it, just don’t do it.”** The problem with this argument is that it is like saying, “If you don’t agree with slavery, don’t own slaves”, or “If you don’t agree with murder, don’t murder.” If abortion causes the death of unborn human beings, then it ought to be prohibited by society just as the killing of all other human beings is prohibited.

### **The Unborn As Human Persons**

We have seen that if the unborn are human persons, then it follows that abortion ought to be offensive to our human decency and illegal in our nation. But *are* the unborn human persons? Our argument that they *are* will proceed in three stages: first, the unborn are living. Second, the unborn are living *humans*. Third, the unborn are living human *persons*.

### **The Unborn Are Living**

It is a universally accepted scientific fact that the unborn—regardless of where we come down on their personhood—are living things. Beckwith notes: “There is no doubt the zygote is biologically alive. The zygote fulfills the four criteria needed to establish biological life: metabolism, growth, reaction to stimuli, and reproduction.”[\[17\]](#)

### **The Unborn Are Living *Humans***

The Law of Biogenesis states that what is conceived by two members of a species is also a member of that species. The offspring of a dog is another dog, of a whale is another whale, and of a human is another human. It cannot be another species from what produced it. Hence, the unborn offspring of human parents is itself human. I am not yet arguing that it is a person, but it is at least human. This is not my opinion, but is scientifically required by the Law of Biogenesis. The French geneticist Jerome L. LeJeune confirms this: “To accept the fact that after fertilization has taken place a new human has come into being is no longer a matter of taste or opinion. The human nature of the human being from conception to old age is not a metaphysical contention, it is plain experimental evidence.”[\[18\]](#)

## The Unborn Are Living Human Persons

The genetic code of the unborn identifies them as human. If the unborn are living and they are human, is there good reason to conclude that they are fully human *persons*—that is, just as actually human as the rest of us? We will give six reasons that strongly argue for an affirmative answer.

**Unique individuality.** First, the unborn have a unique individuality. They are not simply genetically human, like an arm, but possess distinct human individuality. Their genetic code is unique. Their principle of existence is distinct. Their continuity through birth and into adulthood and death remains the same. “There is no decisive break in the continuous development of the human entity from conception until death that would make this entity a different individual before birth.”[\[19\]](#)

**Personhood is ontological, not functional.** Second, many argue that the unborn are “potential persons”. These individuals believe that *interaction* is essential to a full definition of personhood, and since the unborn are incapable of meaningful interaction, they are only potentially human. The problem is that this reasoning will justify infanticide just as much as abortion. Humans possess personhood because of what they are, not because of what they can do: *To accept a functional definition of personhood excludes not only the unborn, but also the unconscious, the temporarily comatose, the sleeping, newborns, and young infants. Therefore, it seems more consistent with our moral intuitions to say that a person functions as a person because he or she is a person, not that she is a person because she functions as a person.*[\[20\]](#)

**Gradualism fails.** Third, one cannot gradually become human. Robert Joyce notes:

*“[The gradualist position] fails to distinguish between natural processes and artificial processes. Only artifacts, such as clocks and spaceships, come into existence part by part. Living beings come into existence all at once and then gradually unfold to themselves and to the world what they already, but only incipiently, are.”*[\[21\]](#)

**Scriptural testimony.** Fourth, the Scriptures have a bearing on this question. They give no indication that the unborn are “humans but not persons.” In fact, the Scriptures indicate that the unborn should be regarded as *fully human*, for they apply personal language to the unborn (Genesis 4:1; Job 3:3), refer to the unborn with the same terminol-

*“It is wrong to kill a human being not because they are a sophisticated collection of atoms, but because they possess non-material souls of immeasurable worth.”*

ogy used for those who are post-uterine (Luke 1:41, 44), and indicate continuity of identity and existence between individuals in both the pre- and post-uterine states (e.g., Psalm 139). In addition, David seems to affirm that he was sinful not simply from birth, but from conception (Psalm 51:5), which would seem to necessitate his humanity at that point (a “non-person” could not have a sinful nature).

**The existence of the soul.** Fifth, the unborn have souls. If humans are *simply* material entities, on what basis are we justified in ascribing intrinsic dignity, worth, and the right to life to them? What rights do mere protons, electrons, and neutrons have? Even our intellect is simply the random result of molecular interactions, in reality having no more worth than swamp gas, if we are purely physical. If humans have value and a right to life, it is because they are *more than just physical*. It is because they have a soul. It is wrong to kill a human being not because they are a sophisticated collection of atoms, but because they possess non-material souls of immeasurable worth.

How do we know that the unborn have souls? The same way we know that post-natal individuals have souls: there are things true of them that cannot be true of purely physical entities. The unborn, for example, can feel pain. The experience of pain is weightless, colorless, odorless, and dimensionless. But it is nonetheless real. It therefore presupposes the existence of a non-material aspect to our being. And the unborn are capable of experiencing it.

But on what basis can we conclude that the unborn have souls *from conception*? On the basis of their continuity of identity. There is a continuity from conception to birth to death such that we are willing to



say that it is the *same individual*, and not a different one, that was conceived, born, and died. But on what basis can we say this, if the individual was *purely* physical at conception? For the actual matter making up the cells and body of the individual is in continual flux. If I replace my neighbor's deck board by board, such that eventually none of the original boards remain, it is no longer the same deck. It would be a new, different deck. In light of the same flux that happens in the matter constituting the human body from conception to death, on what basis can we therefore found our belief that it is the *same* individual going through all those phases? Only by positing the presence of something *beyond the physical*, a non-material aspect of the being, that *did* remain the same throughout it. The continuity of identity from conception to death, therefore, argues for the presence of a soul from the moment of conception.

***The inconsistency of denying personhood to the unborn.*** Sixth, we know that the unborn are fully human persons because there is no consistent basis upon which to deny their personhood. There are four main differences between pre- and post-uterine humans: size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency. [\[22\]](#)

Concerning size, is a bigger person more of a person than a smaller one? Concerning development, wouldn't this criteria also imply that an adult is a more of a person than a teenager, being more developed? Concerning environment, does moving seven inches down the birth canal have any bearing at all on whether you are a human individual? Where you are has no bearing on who you are. Concerning dependency, wouldn't this imply that those who are dependent upon dialysis machines or medication in order to stay alive are not persons either? In essence, the only factors that could possibly warrant the placing of the unborn in a category different from the post-uterine in terms of the rights of personhood would in fact eliminate the rights of many sectors of the post-uterine population. There is no consistent basis upon which the unborn may be classified as "non-human." [\[23\]](#) The refusal to acknowledge that the unborn are human persons has shocking parallels to the Nazi refusal to acknowledge certain ethnic groups as fully human. [\[24\]](#)

## Conclusion

Abortion, causing the death of *something* that is alive, is not simply a matter of the right to choose. The question that must be asked is, “The right to choose *what?*” We have argued that the unborn are living, human persons. As such, they possess the same right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as every other member of the human race. The right to choose an abortion, therefore, is simply the “right” to end the life of another human being with equal rights and deserving of equal protection.

In abortion, a human person in possession of the right to life is discriminated against and denied his or her rights simply because they are either smaller, less developed, inside the womb rather than outside the womb, or dependent upon their mother. This is *natalism*, just as discrimination based upon race is racism and discrimination based upon gender is sexism, and is plain and simple a form of politically correct prejudice against the weakest and most defenseless among us. Such a thing should be unthinkable in a civilized society—especially one that is so pre-occupied with upholding the rights of even the most fringe special interest groups. In a society that claims to care so much about “the little guy” and marginalized, why are the littlest of guys and most marginalized not defended?[25] It’s time we as a society begin to stand up against *natalism* and give our unborn a chance at the God-created lives they deserve.

### Notes:

[1] The meaning of the term “induced abortion” as used in this debate is now clear: the willful termination of a pregnancy. For a very thorough overview of the different types of abortion, see John Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993), 50-51.

[2] U. S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* [online], accessed 17 November 2002, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/01statab/vitstat.pdf>; Internet.

[3] Francis Beckwith, *Politically Correct Death: Answering Arguments for Abortion Rights* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 12.

[4] Ibid, 12.

[5] Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence,” in Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Mentor, 1999), 496. “All men” is likely a gender inclusive term, as indicated by similar alternative phrases later in the context (“consent of the governed,” “right of the people”).

[6] George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1946). What about when the life of the mother is at stake? In those cases, it is better that one should live than that two should die.

[7] On the dangers of framing the issue in terms that imply a distinction between human beings and human persons, see Greg Koukl, “Are Humans Persons,” *Stand to Reason Website* [online],

accessed 17 November 2002, <http://www.str.org/free/commentaries/abortion/arehuman.htm>; Internet.

[8] On the similarity between slavery and abortion, see Greg Koukl, "Abortion and Human Rights," *Stand to Reason Website* [online], accessed 17 November 2002, <http://www.str.org/free/commentaries/abortion/abhmnrts.htm>; Internet.

[9] On the similarity between genocide and abortion, see Greg Koukl, "Murder is OK for the Unborn?," *Stand to Reason* [online], accessed 17 November 2002, <http://www.str.org/free/commentaries/abortion/murderok.htm>; Internet.

[10] Norman Geisler takes the same position I have here argued in Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 136.

[11] And by this I mean *human life* or, more specifically, the life of human beings. I would take issue, then, with Justice Douglas, who although affirming in *Roe v. Wade* that the unborn have no right of life, shockingly affirmed in the case of *Sierra Club Against Morton* (405 US 727 – 1972) that the inanimate objects of the Mineral King area in California (i.e., the "valleys, alpine meadows, rivers, lakes, estuaries, beaches, ridges, groves of trees, swampland" and so forth) have a right to sue over the building of a recreational development, a right to be asserted on its behalf by the Sierra Club. Hence, "swamps and tress have rights, but the human child in the womb has no rights" (Dr. Charles Rice, quoted in Beckwith, 29).

[12] For a helpful overview of embryonic development by weeks, see Kent M. VanDe Graaff and Stuart Ira Fox, *Concepts of Human Anatomy and Physiology* (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1992), 863-869.

[13] Some think it is inconsistent to be anti-abortion and yet affirm the death penalty. But there is a tremendous difference between the two cases: guilt and innocence. The sanctity of life is upheld by the right of the state to execute those who have taken another human life (see John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957], 107-122).

[14] Greg Koukl, *Solid Ground*, (November/December 1997), 3.

[15] Bernard Nathanson, *Aborting America* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 193.

[16] Beckwith, 56.

[17] Ibid, 42. See also the testimony that human life begins at conception in Randy Alcorn, *Pro-life Answers to Pro-choice Arguments* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 2000), 51-56.

[18] *The Human Life Bill: Hearings on S. 158 Before the Subcommittee on Separation of Powers of the Senate Judiciary Committee*, 97<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session (1981), quoted in Ibid, 42.

[19] Beckwith, 116.

[20] Ibid, 108.

[21] Robert Joyce, "Personhood and the Conception Event," *New Scholasticism* 52 (Winter 1978): 113.

[22] I am indebted to Scott Klusendorf, Director of Bioethics at Stand to Reason, for this observation.

[23] Additionally, even if the unborn *could* be legitimately classified as "non-human," it should still follow that abortion ought to be wrong. John Piper makes this case effectively from animal rights laws in "One Issue Politics, One-Issue Marriage, and the Humane Society," in *A Godward Life Volume I* (Sisters: Multnomah, 1997).

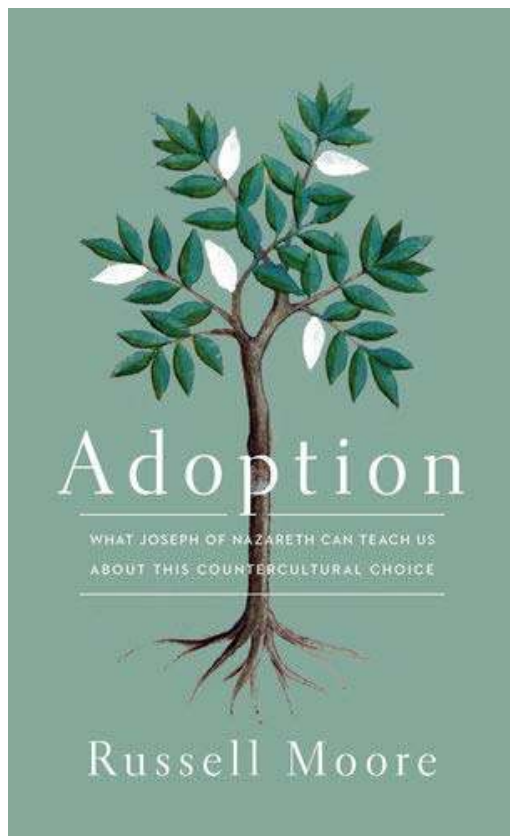
[24] George Will has a George Will discusses the shocking inconsistency of our abortion laws in their tendency to define human life according to the preferences of the parent rather than objectively in "Life and Death and Abortion," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*: October 28, 2002.

[25] Let us not think that change is impossible. The development of a consensus in the evangelical community indicates that progress in the debate is possible. See the history of the evangelical discussion in Paul Fowler, *Abortion: Toward an Evangelical Consensus* (Sisters: Multnomah, 1990).

## A Book Review:

### ***Adoption: What Joseph of Nazareth Can Teach Us about This Countercultural Choice***

By Michael Boling



**I humbly admit I have a bit of a bias when it comes to reading a book on the subject of adoption.** You see, my wife and I made the decision to adopt our daughter a little over three years ago, despite the concerns posed by many, the questions we had about taking a pre-teen into our home to be our daughter, financial worries about the cost of the adoption process, among many other issues we wrestled with. One thing is certain, and that is we were confident God had called us to adopt. Looking back, it was one of the best decisions of our lives.

Adoption is not an easy road to walk and not everyone is called to take a child into their home to be theirs. With that said, all believers are called by God to be involved in taking care of the orphans and the fatherless. Russell Moore, in his helpful little book called, [\*Adoption: What Joseph of Nazareth Can Teach Us about This Countercultural\*](#)

[Choice](#), drives home the importance of helping those in need in a way that will assuredly be a “kick in the pants” for some and a source of reassurance for others that have become engaged on this important issue.

Moore uses Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, as the example of what someone might face who adopts or dares to go against the cultural tide to care for the plethora of children who need a home. He notes the actions of Joseph often take a back seat when we examine the birth of Jesus. This is unfortunate because we can learn quite a bit from how Joseph followed the leading of God and stepped in as the adopted father of Jesus. Moore pertinently comments, “Joseph’s fatherhood is significant for us precisely because of the way the gospel anchors it to the fatherhood of God himself.” He goes on to rightly note, “Joseph is unique in one sense. He is called to provide for and protect the Christ of God. But in other ways Joseph is not unique at all. All of us, as followers of Christ, are called to protect children.”

**The Church and her leaders often write and speak on the need to evangelize.** With that said, we often forget that reaching out to those in need is a function of evangelism and sharing the gospel, be that the unwed teenage mother, who is scared to death and feels the only option is an abortion; or whether that is an abused child, who needs a loving place and parents who will care and protect; or whether that means financially supporting organizations around the world that reach out to children, who sit in orphanages waiting for someone to lend them a loving hand and a permanent home. Moore drives this reality home throughout this [book](#) and I truly hope the reader will pick up on that urgent message and will in turn help transform the lives of these children in the manner God has called them.

We live in a culture that believes children are a burden and a drag on our ability to enjoy life to the fullest. When children get in the way, they are discarded. This societal thought process is antithetical to what we find in Scripture, namely God’s continued call to His people to care for orphans and the fatherless. As Moore has demonstrated through the life of Joseph and his care for our Savior, reaching out sometimes comes at a financial, emotional, and even relational cost to those who answers God’s call. In the end, however, doing the work

God has called us, whether that is adopting a child or helping those who God has called to take such a step, is what the gospel is all about.

**I truly enjoyed this small yet helpful [book](#) by Dr.**

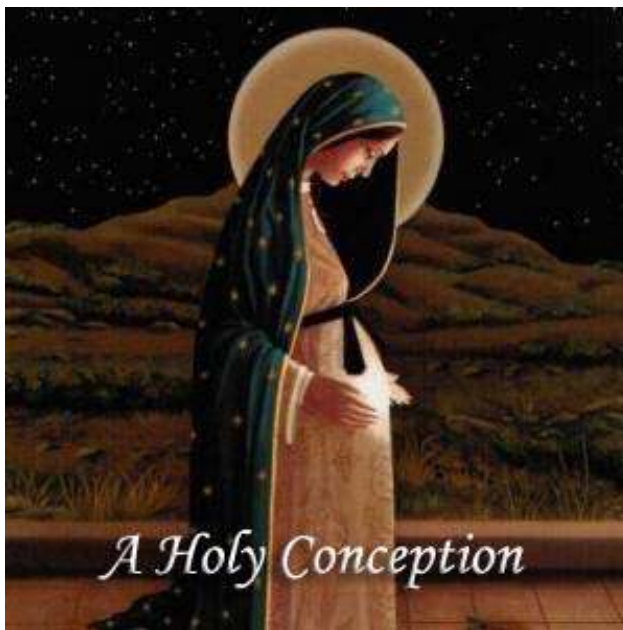
**Moore.** It definitely is a must-read and I encourage those who do take the time to read it to look for ways to share the love of God with children, who so desperately need help and hope. If your church is not engaged in helping the innocent, speak with your pastor and church leaders about ways to get involved as a local community of believers. If God has not called you to adopt, then reach out financially in whatever way possible to help those who are setting aside the comforts of life to help a child. God has called all of us to this mission, and Dr. Moore has provided a call to action. Will you answer the call? I trust you will, and those who read this book will be motivated to do so also.



## The Center of Pro-Life Conviction: Adoption, Abortion, and the Holy Embryo

By Dan Cruver

*"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" —Galatians 4:4-6*



### Connecting the Two Related A's: Adoption and Abortion

God's work of adoption, from its [pre-temporal beginning](#) to its [earth-renewing climax](#), is as pro-life as it gets. When sin broke into the world through Adam's rebellion, [death began its tyrannical reign](#). As a result, human culture became a culture of death, beginning with the story of Cain and Abel and continuing on with ethnic [genocide](#), [politicide](#), [infanticide](#) (abortion), [euthanasia](#), and the like in our contemporary world.

We live in a world where death—since the fall of man in the beginning—continues to dominate the headlines in the major media outlets. If we're not careful, we can become jaded, cynical, and shortsighted in our at-

tempts to advocate for a pro-life agenda. What the world (and the church) actually needs more than a pro-life defense that's filled with political and theological rhetoric is a vision of life in this world that is cast, framed, and informed by [God's consummated work of adoption](#).

There are basically two aspects to God's work of adoption as presented in Scripture. The first aspect is *child-placement*. The Greek word for adoption (*huiothesia*) is a compound of the word "son" and the word "to place." Taken together, these two words mean *placement as a son*.

The second aspect of adoption is *deliverance from the effects of the Fall*. Unfortunately, this aspect of adoption is largely neglected. If you look at how the Apostle Paul actually uses the word adoption, you'll see

"When our functional vision of life in this world is framed and informed by God's work of adoption and its Exodus-like backdrop, we'll find that we are much more bold and compassionate in our defense of unborn children."

that [he surrounds it with references to slavery, bondage, and freedom](#).

This focus by Paul is especially apparent in his use of adoption in [Romans 8](#). God's deliverance of Israel out of Egyptian bondage is the echoing story behind the cosmic story of adoption in this great chapter. Notice the language that Paul uses: "set you free" (v. 2); "led by the Spirit of God" (v. 14; cf. Exo. 13:21); "the spirit of slavery" (v. 15); "subjected to futility" (v. 20); "will be set free" (v. 21); "bondage to corruption" (v. 21); "obtain the freedom" (v. 21); "groaning together" (v. 22; cf. Exo. 2:23); "redemption" (v. 23); and "firstborn" (v. 29; cf. Exo. 4:22).

If you examine Romans 8 closely, you'll find that both *animate* and *inanimate* creation were "subjected to futility" and are in "bondage to corruption" (vv. 20-21). Nothing within the created order is left untouched by Adam's sin. Nothing. This means we, as fallen human beings, are *both* perpetrators *and* victims of sin. This both/and understanding is critical to our opposition to abortion. When we're cognizant

of the fact that those we oppose in our fight against abortion are *both* perpetrators and victims of sin, we will be slower to demonize them. When our functional vision of life in this world is framed and informed by God's work of adoption and its Exodus-like backdrop, we'll find that we are much more bold *and* compassionate in our defense of unborn children.

### Strengthening Our Defense of the Unborn With the Holy Embryo

When we as Christians go to Scripture to unpack the pro-life position and argue against abortion, we typically do not go to texts like Galatians 4:4-6. Sure, we'll go to Galatians to talk about being pro-life *and* an advocate for adoption, but we usually won't go there to show why abortion is wrong. I believe this is unfortunate, because Galatians 4:4-6 is more than just an "adoption" text. It's also a pro-life text that **\_\_\_\_\_** highlights why it is that abortion is so very wrong.

"At just the right time, then, God the Father sent forth His Son from eternity into space and time that He might make fallen sinners His children."

#### ***"How so?" You ask.***

In Galatians 4:4-6, Paul connects the eternality of God (who has *no* beginning) with the redemption of man (who *has* a beginning): "*But when the fullness of time had come, God **sent forth his Son**, born of woman...*" The phrase "God sent forth his Son" means that the Son of God existed outside of time. In John 17:24, Jesus declares that the Father loved him "before the foundation of the world." Before there was a world for the Father to love (John 3:16), there was a Son whom the Father loved for all eternity past. At just the right time, then, God the Father sent forth His Son from eternity into space and time that He might make fallen sinners His children. The incarnation is the redemptive event when the Son—who from all eternity was fully (and only) God—

became man without ceasing to be (fully) God. The Son became what He was not previously (man) without ceasing to be what He was eternally (God). Because of God's sending forth of his Son, the Son is now forever both fully God and fully man in his one person.

### **The Son Became Man without Ceasing To Be God**

Why am I stressing the truth that the Son of God became man at the incarnation without ceasing to be God? Because it means that the Son was present in the womb of the Virgin Mary *at the very moment of conception*. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that when Joseph was resolved to divorce Mary quietly after learning she was pregnant, an angel came to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that *which is conceived in her* is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). Matthew is not just telling us about the virgin *birth* (v.18). He's also telling us about the virgin *conception* (v. 20). This fact is profoundly relevant to the abortion debate.

According to Scottish theologian, Thomas F. Torrance, the virgin conception and incarnation mean that "the fetus is sanctified by the Lord Jesus as an embryonic person" (1). Let me encourage you to read that sentence again before continuing. By the virgin conception, the human fetus is sanctified "as an *embryonic* person." Since the unborn incarnate Son was a personal being from the very moment of his conception onward, every unborn child—from his/her conception onward—is sanctified as a personal being. To abort an unborn child, then, is a direct affront to the redemptive work of God in the incarnation of his Son.

**Torrance continues, "[T]he virgin birth is crucial to our grasp of the nature and status in Christ's eyes of the unborn child.** The Son of God became a human being for us in the womb of the Virgin Mary, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He

became what we are. Think of the importance of the incarnation, then, for our understanding of and regard for the unborn child. Every child in the womb has been brothered by the Lord Jesus. In becoming a hu-

man being for us, he also became an embryo for the sake of all embryos, and for our Christian understanding of the being, nature and status in God's eyes of the unborn child" (2).

"The very center of our pro-life conviction is the Holy Embryo, and when the incarnation is the center of our defense of the unborn, we'll find that we become bolder and more compassionate in the face of human evil."

Prior to the incarnation of the Son, you can see how people might have failed to see the inherent value and importance of the embryo. It would not have been a huge leap to conclude that abortion and infanticide were viable options to an unwanted pregnancy or child. But with the virgin conception and incarnation, that has forever changed.

**The human embryo's deepest identity is found in being an image bearer with the Son of God,** who became man, with the Son who became the truly embryonic one for the sake of all embryos. The Son's coming to us in the virginal conception is the essential basis of the value of every unborn fetus. The very center of our pro-life conviction is the Holy Embryo, and when the incarnation is the center of our defense of the unborn child, we'll find that we become bolder and more compassionate in the face of human evil.

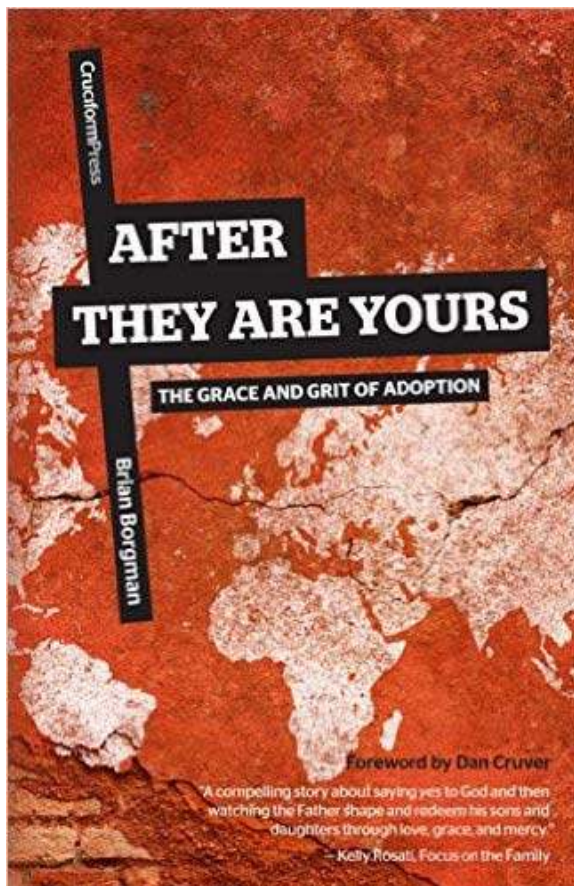
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Thomas F. Torrance: *"The Being and Nature of the Unborn Child."*  
*Ibid.*

## A Book Review:

### ***After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption***

By Michael Boling



**Two years ago, my wife and I adopted a girl from North Carolina** and as a result of that adoption, our lives changed significantly. Many things we thought we were prepared for, in reality, we weren't, and conversely, many things we thought we were unprepared for, in reality, we were fully prepared for when those events arose.

Adoption is very serious, very scary, yet a very rewarding endeavor. Furthermore, adoption has its own set of myths, both good and bad that either drive individuals to or from adopting a child. Brian Borgman, in his excellent book, [\*After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption\*](#), tackles many common issues adoptive parents face, while providing valuable biblical guidance on how to deal with

problems that will certainly arise while remaining focused on the task at hand as a parent of an adopted child.



**Borgman provides personal insight into the adoption process** to include events that took place prior to his own adopted child coming home on a permanent basis, as well as the issues his family faced once their child became part of their family. He aptly dispels many common myths, while providing valuable tools for adoptive parents to consider and implement. As I read this book, I was struck by the commonality of Borgman's experience with his adopted child mirrors that of our own. While the specific events may be quite

"There have been many times when, in the chaos of a day, my wife and I have forgotten the ministry of grace aspect of adoption."

different and the respective children's pasts not quite the same, nonetheless, the underlying issues he faced are essentially the same as those my wife and I faced, both prior to our adoption process being finalized and even to this day. Thus, everything Borgman states in this book had personal significance and applicability. I would venture to say that anyone who has adopted a child will have the same experience when reading this helpful book. On more occasions than I can count, as I read something Borgman said it was as if a light was shone into some areas of concern and struggle my wife and I face.

One prime example is found in Borgman's chapter on adoption as a ministry of grace. He rightly notes, "Adoptive parents are called to step intentionally into brokenness for the purpose of healing." For those who may forget the long term nature of this healing process, Borgman reminds them that "it will require a lifetime of ministry." This is an important truth for adoptive parents to remember. There have been many times when, in the chaos of a day, my wife and I have forgotten the ministry of grace aspect of adoption.

**In the midst of the arguing and frustration**, in the throes of the battle, adoptive parents must be mindful, as Borgman points out that, "parenting is both ministry and spiritual battle." Furthermore, adoption is, in and of itself, spiritual warfare. The enemy is *never* the child. The enemy remains that despicable Enemy of old—Satan, who detests the very thought of a child being rescued through



adoption. Borgman's statement, "the last thing the Enemy wants to risk is to have children raised in the love and light of Christ's gospel" truly resonated with me as it reminded and refocused what adoption is all about, namely reaching out to a lost and hurting child to bring them to a place of love, protection, and belonging.

Reaching out to a lost and hurting child is exactly what God has done for us as His children. This reality is also driven home by Borgman throughout his book and rightly so. We often forget that what God has done for us should be in turn reflected in how we understand the adoption of a child. In those "what if" moments as Borgman describes them, those times when you may question why you adopted this child, who is throwing a tantrum, being willfully disobedient, or who seems to have issues that are taxing every fiber of your being, it is vital to remember what God has done for us. Moreover, as Borgman so wonderfully comments, "During the tough times, we need to remember that God does have a plan for our adopted children – and for us. He never makes a mistake."

**Borgman also brings a very practical set of tools to bear for those times when you feel like throwing up your hands** or when you encounter issues that seem more you can handle. One important aspect is that of the need to avoid escalation and provocation. Adopted children, by definition, come from hard places. The escalation and provocation issue was quite massive in my own home in the first few months after our child came to live with us on a permanent basis. Despite all of the pre-adoption training we received, we were relatively unprepared for the authority battles, and quite honestly, when such situations arose, we took the wrong tact more often than not. The principles Borgman shares such as taming the tongue, avoiding escalation, and most importantly seeking wise counsel, are truly invaluable and should be noted and applied immediately by all who read this book. There are many who have traveled down the road of adoption and who can share their valuable experiences. Borgman wisely notes that it is important to be careful whom you trust to provide counsel to you, with the necessary focus being on a couple who are "spiritually mature and realistic."

**I highly recommend this [book](#) for those thinking about adopting, those currently in the adoption process, and for those who have already adopted a child.** Borgman's

personal stories repeatedly hit home and the guidance he provides is biblically sound and extremely practical. This [book](#) will assuredly be a blessing to those who may feel as if they are overwhelmed in the daily grind of what is often involved with adopting and raising an adopted child.

## Helping Adoptive Parents

By Brian Borgman



**I was speaking at a conference on my book, *After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption* (Cruciform Press, 2014).** I was talking openly and transparently about my wife's and my struggles as adoptive parents, our failures, and our hopes. As I did, there were 4 or 5 women who wept

throughout the session. Their husbands sat there, trying to comfort them, while they held back tears. After I was done, I was approached by some of them, asking me the familiar questions, with broken hearts. My own heart broke as I saw their pain and their hope for better relationships with their adopted children. The pain is very real.

The evangelical orphan care and adoption movement has moved into its second decade. Some adoption and orphan care ministries are realizing the need to deal with the challenges that are emerging as Christian engagement in orphan care, foster care, and adoption grows and develops. Frankly, there are personal challenges that we don't like to talk about. They are the kind of things that made the mothers at the conference weep. Some are opposed to putting too much emphasis on the challenges, lest we dissuade people from adopting. However, I am firmly convinced that being equipped is good for us and for our children. The more

we talk openly about the challenges, the better we can encourage the weary. I am not talking about “adoption gripe sessions” where we bash our kids or their biological parents. I am talking about creating a framework within our churches where biblical principles are put into practice, being applied to the lives of adoptive parents.

The cornerstone of helping adoptive parents and families is to simply recognize that they need support, encouragement, and sometimes counsel. Frequently, the adoptive family struggles in silence, not wanting to be negative or seem like they are complaining. We need to realize that there is regular encouragement that we all need (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:12-13). That kind of encouraging environment needs to be cultivated so that if adoptive families need help, they aren’t afraid to get help. Adoptive parents should know that their church family will gladly “encourage the exhausted and strengthen the feeble” (Isa 35:3).

The second crucial piece to this framework is that the church cannot minimize the difficulties of adoption. We need to try to understand the struggles of adoptive parents as much as possible. Adoptive parents can get gun-shy about seeking help when they are told that “disorders” and “syndromes” are not really things to worry about, kids are kids, and there is nothing different about adopted kids. I urge you, if you have this attitude towards adoptive parents, you need to seriously change your mind. Paul Tripp notes, “Although you are doing a wonderful thing, you must recognize that children were meant to live with their natural parents. When children are raised by those who aren’t their natural parents, there will be struggles and difficulties. *Parenting an adopted child is often harder than parenting your natural child. Your adopted child deals with significant personal issues that your natural child never has to deal with.*”

**Rosaria Butterfield has written some of the most important words on adoption** from a book that’s not directly about adoption, “No child asks to be adopted. No child asks for incompetent or rejecting birth parents. No child wants to be told how ‘lucky’ he is to be adopted. Adoption always starts with a loss.

Adoption always combines ambiguous loss with unrequested gain. An adopted child faces this paradox – this ambiguous grief – at each developmental stage. His or her family must choose to either welcome the complexity or make the child go it alone. We choose to walk alongside our children, even as we don't always understand how deep or how raw the complexity rests. The journey is frightful. At its core is this: do I love Jesus enough to face my children's potential rejection of me?"

Things like Reactive Detachment Disorder or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome are real issues. If we dismiss the peculiar challenges of adoption, we will never really be able to minister to families. Most people don't have to deal with a child who secretly agonizes over not being wanted and "given away." Most people don't have to deal with the pain of children not wanting to be held or hugged. Abuse, rejection, hunger, neglect, all have an impact on a child's emotional state. Be sensitive to these issues, do not dismiss them. If you do, the adoptive parents will conclude that you do not understand.

**The third piece of this framework is to listen to adoptive parents and families with grace.** Be a good listener (James 1:19). Don't be shocked by what they might say. If we create an environment where families come for help, then we need to listen well. But also, when it comes time to offer help, seek to liberate these parents from the evangelical parenting formulas. Formulas can be legalistic. They can exasperate the child. They can be a form of bondage and frustration to the parents.

"Adaptability, flexibility, and creativity within a biblical framework can be liberating and change the situations."

Encourage and assist adoptive parents to be creative and wise in their parenting. They need to be asking the Lord for wisdom and insight (Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9). They need discernment based on love and spiritual insight. They need to learn how not to exasperate or provoke their children (Ph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). What may have been standard parental procedure for their biological children, may be the source of exasperation and even anger with adopted children.

One adoptive mom said to me, "In an adoptive home, it's almost

always "backwards day." What works well for well-adjusted kids in a biological home tends to be the opposite of what adoptive kids, with brokenness and interesting survival techniques, benefit from." Paul Tripp's wisdom is refreshing here, "Your struggles with your adopted child will not always be the result of your mistakes. Sometimes your struggles will stem from inherent differences in the hardwiring of your child. *Those differences will require different parenting strategies from the ones you use with your natural children.*" Adaptability, flexibility, and creativity within a biblical framework can be liberating and change the situations. I deal with this more extensively in my book, with some specific examples.

Finally, while I am urging encouragement and support, we also need to help adoptive parents examine their own hearts (Psa. 139:23-24; Prov. 4:23). Sometimes our challenges are simply exacerbated by our own idols. This was the hardest part of the book to write (chapter 6), because God used our son to expose so many idols in our hearts. But if we are going to do more than sympathize, we need to also lovingly ask hard questions: "Why do you seem to take his behavior as if it a personal insult?" or "Why are you so focused on how this is affecting you?" and perhaps, "You say she is pushing your buttons. Maybe we should ask, 'What idols is she knocking over?'"

**Adoption is glorious, but it can also be hard.** The Church needs to stand ready to help these courageous, loving parents who have stepped out to do something hard. The Church needs to cultivate the kind of environment where such parents and families are encouraged and strengthened because they can be honest without fear. If our churches are serious about the Gospel, we will be serious about how to help those who have acted on the Gospel and adopted.

Paul Tripp, *Helping Your Adopted Child, Understanding Your Child's Unique Identity* ((New Growth Press, 2008), 6. Italics are mine.

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Crown and Covenant, 2011), 126.

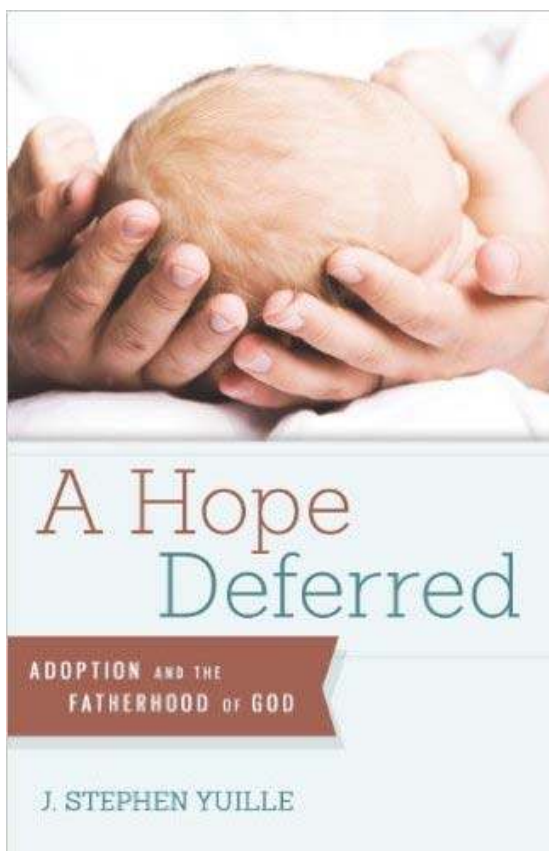
I highly recommend Jim Newheiser's little book, *Parenting is More than a Formula* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 2015).

Tripp, 7.

## A Book Review:

### ***A Hope Deferred: Adoption and the Fatherhood of God***

By Dave Jenkins



**Dr. J.I. Packer once stated,** "Adoption is the highest privilege of the gospel. The traitor is forgiven, brought in for supper, and given the family name." With that sentence, we get right to the heart of the Gospel. If there has been one doctrine that has been neglected in recent years, it arguably has been adoption. Recent years has also seen a renewed focus on talking about what adoption is from the Word of God and how important it is to the Church. This trend encourages me, because in this reviewer's opinion, adoption is at the core of the Gospel. Jesus takes rebels and turns them into His friends. At the heart of the doctrine of adoption is the truth of the grace of God. We get what we don't deserve, namely pardon and forgiveness through the finished work of Jesus. Through the doctrine of adoption, we come to understand

how Jesus takes rebels and makes them servants and sinners into saints, all for the praise of His name and for His glory. A new book on adoption has come out by J. Stephen Yuille called, [\*A Hope Deferred: Adoption and the Fatherhood of God\*](#), which examines the doctrine of



adoption from the Word of God and everyday life.

[\*A Hope Deferred\*](#) has fourteen chapters and comes in at 148 pages. The author begins his discussion of adoption in chapter one, with explaining what adoption is rooting his examination of adoption throughout the book in Romans 8 in order to help the reader understand the doctrine of adoption. One of the greatest strengths of this book (and there are many) is the manner in which the author illustrates biblical teaching through practical experience. It has been said that the best books are lived and this book is definitely one the author has lived. The author pens this book out of considerable experience with adopting a child, a story he weaves throughout the book to point out the depths of our adoption through the finished work of Jesus Christ. By being biblical and utilizing lessons from personal experience with adoption, the author helps us understand what adoption is from the Word of God.

**Ours is an age where many children are without fathers.** Many people grow up despising their fathers because their fathers abandon them. Growing up, I was a child who had a neglectful father and it was the doctrine of adoption that strengthened my faith in God. While many people run away from God during these times, I ran *to God*, understanding that He is my heavenly Father who cares for me. God is not distant; He is near to His people. He promises to be a Father to the fatherless. We see this outlined in the doctrine of adoption, namely that the Father sent the Son to take those who were His enemies and turn them into His friends, by transferring them from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus. It is precisely at this point where the author assists us through his teaching on adoption by helping those like me, who had an absent father, understand that our Father in heaven is different than our earthly fathers. This is no small point for many people like myself. Furthermore, this truth is near and dear to the heart of God, who longs to redeem, reconcile, and restore those broken by absentee fathers and broken homes, by drawing them to Himself. God is a Father who is near to them and who makes broken people whole through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Yuille enables us to understand our adoption as children of God by first explaining to us how we were ransomed, redeemed, and reconciled. He aptly states:

*“The term ransom means to purchase the freedom of a slave. And so, Christ is saying that he gives his life for us to free us. Our bondage is immeasurable in magnitude. Therefore, the ransom must be infinite in measure—the very Son of God. When Christ died on the cross as our substitute, he actually accomplished two things for us. First, he paid our debt. We’re guilty of disobeying God, and we’re guilty of breaking his covenant. As a result, we’re debtors to him—under the curse. But Christ paid our debt upon the cross. That’s called redemption. Second, Christ purchased our inheritance. At the time of Adam’s fall, we lost everything. Most importantly, we fell into a state of alienation from God. But Christ purchased our inheritance (membership into God’s family) upon the cross. That’s called adoption. In Christ, we possess a new name, new position and new identity. And Christ passes on this inheritance in perpetuity to all his people. It’s important to note that the link between redemption and adoption is reconciliation: a change in our legal status before God. By Christ’s death, redemption effects reconciliation (i.e., peace with God, and reconciliation becomes the basis of God’s adoption of us” (16-17).*

[\*A Hope Deferred\*](#) by J. Stephen Yuille will help those who have absent fathers, regardless for the reason behind their absence. In an age where many children go without a father, the Church should celebrate the abundance of resources emphasizing the doctrine of adoption. Furthermore, the Church should continue to reach out to those children who don’t have parents so that they might not be stuck in orphanages and foster homes, but may instead be raised in homes by parents that ground their lives in the Word of God.

Yuille’s excellent treatise on adoption ably probes the doctrine of adoption, while interweaving the author’s personal testimony in order to help his readers understand the essential relationship between adoption, affliction, and the fatherhood of God over His people. The best books are grounded in the Word of God, in personal example, and contain a good story of how God has worked a particular doctrine into their own life-experience. This book combines all three of these traits and thus is a must-read, as well as a resource I highly recommend for those who were raised in broken homes or are interested in adopting a child.

## **Legislating Morality: What Can the Church Do About Abortion With the State?**

By Rev. Dr. Jason M. Garwood

***“Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully.” (1 Timothy 1:8 – ESV)***



**I’m sure you’ve heard the argument a hundred times.**  
*Why would you even go that route? I mean, really? You think that legislat-*

*ing morality is the way to go? That somehow getting a law passed is going to fix it all? Just preach the gospel!* No one just preaches the gospel. In fact, just this morning I was schooling my son at home with math.

We spent 10 minutes on our assignment, and not once did I say anything about the gospel. “And you call yourself a *pastor*?!” My guess is, you didn’t just preach the gospel today. You did other things, right? Maybe you went to work, or stayed home and changed a diaper. Maybe you went golfing or took some time to read a good book.

“To take the life of even the smallest of humans is to violate the Law of God.”

*No one just preaches the gospel.* Which means we need a new argument.

## Getting Something Straight

To be sure, the gospel is the Kingdom of God, the announcement that the Christ has come. Jesus fulfilled Israel’s redemptive trajectories, taking their story and bringing it to its climactic point: He lived a perfect life in obedience to the Law of God, He was crucified for our sin as a substitutionary atonement, He was buried, and then raised in resurrection power on the third day—all of which we call *good news*—and after all was said and done, He ascended to the Throne of David in heaven and is seated there with His scepter in tow, ruling, and reigning while the Father makes all His enemies His footstool.

If we’re going to have a discussion about abortion, we better have the gospel straight. Not only do we need the gospel straight, we need the discussion to be clearly defined. *Abortion is murder.* To take the life of even the smallest of humans is to violate the Law of God (Genesis 9:6; cf. Exodus 20:13). The issue of abortion cannot be framed around women’s rights (what if the baby is female, then?), choice (so the Nazi’s were right in choosing what was best for them?), and personal aspirations for the future (rape should be legal, after all, my sexual freedom helps me do better in college, right?). Murder is a crime punishable by death, and as the Apostle Paul makes abundantly clear, the law is in fact good, so long as it functions the way it is supposed to function: to

suppress and punish evil (1 Tim. 1:8). The law doesn't punish the righteous—those clothed in Christ's priestly garments—it punishes those who violate the law of God. "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers." (1 Tim. 1:9, KJV) In other words, the law of speed limits only becomes a problem for the person who violates it. Consequently, Christians must call abortion for what it is: the taking of life, the shedding of blood, the purposeful destroying of an actual person...murder.

### So What Do We Do?

Having established some parameters, I want to take this a step further. God is the only Sovereign. Only He imputes meaning to the universe. An atom exists because God has sovereignly willed them into existence. The color red is the color red (and not blue) because God has sovereignly willed it to be this way. *To be sovereign is to not just rule, but reign; and not just reign, but in order to decipher this from that.* Because God is a covenantal God, He has sovereignly delegated certain covenantal spheres. In Scripture, those spheres are: individual self-government; family government; ecclesial government; and finally, State government. Each has their roles, regulations, responsibilities, and guidelines. The Church is to administer the sacraments, the family is to carry out the dominion mandate, and the State is to *wield the sword*.

Romans 13:1-4 states, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."

While I simply do not have the time and space to go into this too far, I will say this much. Romans 13 does not teach the unlimited power of

the State, nor does it teach the unqualified obedience of an individual to the State. Paul says that those institutions, like the State, are in existence because God is sovereign *over* them. Rulers and civil magis-

“There is no neutral ground. Either man will be governed by God, or he will be governed by tyrants.”

trates exist because God says they should exist. This means God alone dictates the roles they must play. And what is the role the civil magistrate must play? Since he is a deacon of God (the word “servant” is the same word for “deacon”), *he is an avenger of God’s wrath*. Individuals do not

avenge themselves (see Romans 12:19), but leave it up to God and His chosen means.

In addition, these verses presuppose something important: *the State is to carry out God’s will in accordance with God’s law*. Paul says to, “Do what is good,” and then speaks of doing that which is “wrong.” How does one determine which is which? According to God’s Word. The principle of the State’s covenantal sphere of authority is very simple (and a cursory reading of Kings and Chronicles demonstrates this as well): *The State is to govern according to God’s Law, and any law that requires that which God forbids or forbids that which God requires is not a true law, and hence can be resisted*. As a result, Christians must obey God rather than men.

### A Gospel Issue

All of this is to say that Christians have a duty to be good citizens, leavening righteousness in their respective nations so as to see God’s laws honored, while teaching the nations to obey all that Christ has commanded. Which means that in turn, the State and her appointed leaders must rule under the Lordship of Christ (see Psalm 2). But one thing we must clarify: *all laws are religious*. Any culture that a society produces is their religion externalized. There is no neutral ground. Either man will be governed by God, or he will be governed by tyrants. Either laws will honor the gospel, or they will compete against the gospel.

That’s why this is a gospel issue. The false gospels of the state are



plentiful. The State mandates a tithe (way more than what God requires!) and promises to take care of us. The sacraments are entitlement programs that foster an ever-increasing welfare state. “Ah, yes, the State will take care of you! Trust us.” Only the truly Sovereign can say such things.

**Because there is no neutral ground, and because the very nature of law is religious** (it presupposes a worldview), Christians can and should be involved in legislating good, godly, and biblical laws. *This is not the same as preaching the gospel, but to preach the gospel is to give a fully-orbed worldview under the Lordship of Christ.* We must elect godly leaders who fear God. We must write to them, speak to them, and implore them to do what is right. Like Nathan, the prophet, the Church must rebuke David when necessary. This means being godly trouble-makers who speak prophetically to the State and her leaders. We don’t revolt, we preach. We don’t carry the sword of steel, but the sword of the Word. Since all legislation is religious in nature, we seek to see the crown rights of Jesus acknowledged and legislated instead.

To those who would object and say, “You can’t mix politics and religion,” I would say, “Too late; it’s already being done.” Politics cannot ever be conflated with the gospel, but to say that the two don’t have *any* correlation is to buy into the myth of neutrality. The laws on the books regarding *Roe v. Wade* *presuppose* a secular humanistic worldview built on naturalism and evolution. *That* is religious!

To those who would object and say, “Separation of Church and State! You can’t do that,” I would say, “Nonsense. Christ’s Church has much to say to the God-ordained institution of the State. The Bible clearly teaches that the State is to govern according to God’s Law, therefore, the Church must be entrusted with the prophetic responsibility of rebuking, correcting, and teaching the State what the Word of God says on matters pertaining to societal jurisprudence.”

Finally, because we care about righteousness, and believe what the Bible says about “Righteousness exalt[ing] a nation” (Proverbs 14:34), we care deeply about loving others. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You



shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

The entirety of Old Testament Law and Prophetic witness points to the law of love: loving God, loving others. And what is love? “Love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). Love for God and neighbor means love for justice and righteousness. We love our neighbors when we don’t covet their things and kill them. It is loving one’s neighbor when we seek their well-being. It is *love* to warn of one’s sin against God by the *purposeful* and *intentional murdering of a baby* in the womb.

**So we continue to be salt and light in a place of rotting meat and darkness.** We push to see abortion completely eradicated the “god” named Molech, wiped out completely. We stay involved in politics because the Lordship of Christ has much to say about governance and law. And we do so all the while proclaiming the good news of the Gospel.

## Lessons on the Journey of Adoption

By Craig Hurst



**I love to speak and write, but I am not a storyteller. In the adoption world story is king.** The story of a child languishing in an orphanage across the ocean can pull on the hearts and minds of prospective adoptive parents and they will give all they can to make that child theirs. The story of a family's adoptive journey can be the final push for another family to make

the decision to adopt a child they have been thinking of and praying for months for, or even years. The story of an adoption to-be can drive many people to give of their resources to make it a reality for an orphan and their waiting family.

Stories. We love stories but I am not a storyteller. My wife is a storyteller. When you read her words you better have a box of tissues in

hand. No, what I am is an analyzer. While I cannot offer a heart-throbbing account of our two adoptions, I can offer advice for those looking to adopt.

What follows are a number of important things to keep in mind when considering adoption. I do not claim to be the first person out there to have said these things, but there is a lot of good (and some bad) advice out there. What I want to share with you are lessons I think are some of the most important and can be lost in the multitude of books and articles you might read and personal conversations you will have with others who have adopted.

### **Lesson #1 – The Two Shall Become One Flesh**

The vast majority of you who adopt will be married. Many foreign countries require this and many single adults are just not in a position to be able to adopt. Like any other major decision a married couple makes, this is one you must make together. You have to both be on board with adopting. As a one-flesh union you have to be together on this. The adoption journey is harder than you imagine. It will find the weaknesses of your marriage and try to pull at them and tear you apart.

If one spouse needs time to think and pray about moving forward with adoption, then the other spouse needs to give it to them. If one spouse says no for now, then it is no for now. As much as the church is called to adopt, adoption is not worth ripping your marriage apart if one spouse is not on board. God does not want you to destroy one good thing (your marriage) for the sake of another (adoption).

Let me speak to men specifically for a minute. As the husband of a wife who is a major advocate in the adoption world, about 90% of the time it is the wife that is the first person to consider adoption. When your wife first comes to you DO NOT say no. *By the time she has come*

*to you she is already emotionally invested in the idea or even a specific child and to immediately say no will harm her and your relationship.* Here are four things you should do as part of your first response: (1) ask to see a picture of the child (if available), (2) ask to read the child's file, (3) ask your wife how she got to this point, and (4) tell her you need some time to think and pray about it. Men, God uses many people in your life to move you towards things He wants you to do, and your wife is one of them. In fact, she is probably the most important and primary one.

## **Lesson #2 – Seek Wise Counsel**

While the decision to adopt, whether for a married couple or single adult, is ultimately up to you, it is wise and prudent to seek the counsel of those whose opinions you respect. There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors and this is definitely a decision you need to seek others advice on. Hopefully one of your pastors is one of them. Maybe is it a mentor, or older sibling that you have always gone to for advice, or even your parents. Maybe you have close friends who know your family well whom you can ask.

There is a rub when it comes to asking advice about adopting. Believe it or not, many people automatically say no, even pastors and church leaders. They say no because as Christian because adoption is still an uncomfortable thing in many Christian circles. There are a lot of bad reasons people might say no, but there are some good ones. If someone tells you should not adopt because your marriage is failing, then that is a good reason to say no for now. If you are bankrupt that is a good reason for someone to say no. If one or more of your biological children are really struggling with an addiction or are at a point in their lives that they need a lot of time and attention then you probably need to say no for now. While our obedience to that command looks different for different people, another person's reason for saying no for themselves does not have to be a reason for you to say no.

### **Lesson #3 – Get Real About Adoption**

If the only exposure you have had to adoption is the original *Annie* movie, then you need a reality check. There are two sides to the adoption coin and we must keep both in focus. Adoption is a beautiful picture of redemption but redemption is not always filled with dreamy experiences.

On the one hand, adoption shows us the love of God at work in the world. It is a wonderful thing to see an orphaned child united with a forever family. It is a wonderful thing to see a family or single adult willing to bring a child that is not made in their own image into their family and make them one of their own. Adoption stories are wonderful to read and will bring many tears to your eyes. On the other hand, adoption is because things are not as they should be in this world, and specifically in the life of the child or children you are looking to adopt. Adoption is hard work. You are working against the negative effects of what orphan-hood does to a child. You can take a child out of an orphanage overnight, but you, as a parent, will spend years, and the child will spend much of their life, taking that orphanage out of the child.

Adoption is a story of redemption in the life of a child, but all redemptive stories have in them episodes that are hard to endure. Life in an orphanage or foster home is not ideal, no matter how much their caretakers love them. Every caretaker is their parent, and yet they do not have parents. Everyday can be a fight for their lives and even though your kids don't have to fight for their lives in your home, your adopted child will have to learn that over time. Chaos is normal to many orphans and they will bring that chaos into your home until they realize that harmony is normal and chaos is not.

To go with lesson number two, I would strongly suggest to make

sure you seek advice from families that have adopted. If you know any put them at the top of your list. If you don't then ask your friends if they know any that you can talk to. The best person to ask about adoption is someone who has adopted. They are in the best position to give you a realistic idea of its beauties and hardships. The redemption of adoption brings with it the realities of suffering.

### **Lesson #4 – Their Baggage is Not Your Fault**

If there is one thing we all bring into a relationship with another person it is our own baggage. Other people's baggage is not your fault. You did not create the environment or the events in their life in which those cumbersome pieces of luggage were forged. Both parties in a marriage bring their own baggage to the marriage.

When it comes to adoption, your child(ren) will bring their own baggage into your house; baggage that you did not help to create or give to them. Whether they hit you or others, spew horrible words out of their mouths, intentionally break other kids' things because they want it and can't have it so no one else will have it, or whether they obsess over the food they eat. They will have baggage from their past that you will not understand.

When your child makes progression and then regresses (for a time) back to old behaviors, attitudes, and thought patterns, you will instinctively blame yourself. You will blame yourself first because you thought you helped your child move past those things but now, like a dog to its own vomit, they have returned to them. When bonding is going well and then a new behavior starts, you will instinctively think it is because of something you did. By far, the vast majority of the time it is not your fault. Working to remove the baggage in a child's life is like peeling an onion. You peel off one layer only to find another and sometimes it seems like layers get put back on again. And so you work to peel them off again.

Yes, there are things you might do, things you will do (no matter how intentional) to cause your adopted child to act out, but most of the time it is not because of anything you have done. Adopted children will spew out their hurt all over you. It is not because they hate you or wish they were back in an orphanage in China or Russia. It is because they are hurting and you happen to be the one there when it all comes out as the ugly mess that it is.

When people sin against others, the backlash can be miserable and hurtful. These are kids who do not know how to deal with their anger, hurt, and past abuse. As a parent you often don't know about it until it comes out in a less than ideal manner. They are going to come with baggage and try to dump it all over you, but it is not your fault.

### **Lesson #5 – Redemption in Adoption is a Long Road**

To follow lesson four, the hopeful redemption that you will see in the life of your adopted child is going to be a long road. It will extend even beyond the years that they live in your house. The road to redemption for all of us extends from the moment we are saved till the day we die. It is marked with bumps, bruises, and hardships. For an adopted child this road will be similar but much different.

The road to redemption for an adopted child will be marked with things that you will not see in the life of your biological children. They will be recovering from abuse of all kinds and all kinds of issues that abuse produces in the life of a person. And they will be dealing with it as a child. But it is so worth it. Adoption ends many negative things in a child's life, but the road to redemptive recovery is long. At times it will look like a valley with many shadows of death hanging over your child, and even you as the parent. But you are always looking and pointing to the light of life at the end of the tunnel. That just over the hill is the bright Son that makes darkness run and hide. The redemption that adoption brings to the life of an orphan is worth all of the baggage that will be thrown at you and sludge that you will have to walk through.



## **Advice for Those Interested in Adopting**

By Michael Boling

***“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship (adoption). And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” (Romans 8:15)***



**Two years ago, my wife and I adopted our daughter. I can only imagine what it must be like to be a foster child** awaiting that forever family to come along, a group of people you have longed for, and a place to have a new start on life, leaving the past behind and the troubles you endured behind as well. While I watched the excitement build on my daughter's face, as we began to find out the final

adoption paperwork was in the works, it was hard to understand the entirety of how she felt other than the obvious sense of relief and finality. Knowing where she has come from, there was a great sense of relief and calm that came over her as she realized she was now in her forever home with people who love and care for her.

Deciding to adopt was not an easy process. My wife and I lost track of the number of people who tried to convince us to pursue another approach. “Adopted kids come from such rough backgrounds and thus will be nothing but trouble” was the typical mantra that was sent our direction more often than not. Despite the push to choose an alternate direction, my wife and I continued to pursue what we felt strongly God was leading us to do, namely to reach out to a child in need and to welcome that kiddo into our family as our own.

Anyone who has gone through the lengthy adoption process can attest it is not for the impatient nor faint of heart. Understandably, there is much rigor and a mountain of paperwork to complete on the part of the potential adoptive family. Adoption agencies as well as the state and federal government want to ensure the child is being placed with a family that is suitable for that child and in an environment that can properly address the particular needs of the child. For instance, some children might have educational development delays or physical handicaps that take the special care of a family who is able to meet those issues. Our daughter had a few educational hiccups in her early childhood due to the neglect of her biological parents. Due to that issue, we had to demonstrate our ability to address those needs and to ensure academic growth. We also had to ensure that counseling services were in place to continue moving our daughter forward emotionally from the trauma she experienced in her early childhood. All this took time, money, and sticking with what God was leading us to do.

Such things might serve to scare many people away from adopting a child. There is the inherent fear of not being able to care for a child with special needs or helping a child work through emotional setbacks. Many feel they are not a child psychologist or believe they could not financially afford such a journey. Quite frankly, there are certainly some who should not go on this journey of adoption. It is definitely not for everyone. With that said, if God is leading you to adopt, let me share a four points to consider.

### **Four Important Points about Adoption**

First, seek out a quality adoption agency. Your adoption agency point of contact will be your lifeline throughout this process. There are a number of options to choose from. We utilized the services of Lutheran Child and Family Services. If they have a branch in your area, we highly recommend them. It is often helpful to ask those in your church or circle of friends who have adopted children, as to what adoption agency or service they used. Word of mouth and personal experience are helpful barometers.

Second, prepare yourself for a lengthy journey. We adopted a child from another state. One would have thought we were trying to adopt a child from another country given all the additional paperwork and red tape. There are many adoption options such as overseas, within your state, inter-state, and family just to name a few. Each option carries with it varying costs, timelines, and requirements. It will behoove you to first decide which path to take and when you proceed down that path.. Part of the length will come from the inherent excitement that builds, especially when you have been selected for a child and you begin visitation. The final month until placement seems like an eternity. Remain patient, knowing that glorious day when that child joins your family will soon arrive. Anxiety will not speed the process up. Trust me...we tried.

Third, the honeymoon will be over rather quickly. Remember when you first got married how everything was sweet and happy go lucky? At least until you forgot to put down the toilet seat. The same thing goes for when the child you waited for so long finally joins your home. The honeymoon may seem like it will last forever, but be forewarned – it will not. These are children with often horrible pasts, kids coming from heart-breaking situations. Those issues will continue to rear their ugly heads. Your adoption agency and the training you receive before your child joins your family will help a great deal; however, you are never fully prepared for what will likely happen. You will need to demonstrate a great deal of patience, firm yet loving parenting skills, and a high dose of time spent in prayer and connecting with people who have been there and done that. Surround yourself with a group of people who can mentor you and take advantage of post-placement services your adoption agency can either provide or connect you with. Furthermore, by all means spend much time in prayer. God will get you through the difficult times and be-

lieve me, there will be many.

Fourth, never forget God reached out and adopted us into His family. As noted in 1 Peter 2:9, as adopted sons, we are a “chosen people, the King’s *cohanim*, a holy nation, a people for God to possess! Why? In order for you to declare the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” What a glorious thing to grasp! We are part of the family of God. God is our Father.

As a father, I am still contemplating what that means, what my role is, and how to be the best father I can to my daughter. As an imperfect human, I know I will make my share of mistakes which likely will far outweigh my victories. Part of maturing in the role of a father is recognizing those failures and potential pitfalls and leaning on my heavenly Father to help me raise my daughter in the fear and admonition of the Lord. God our heavenly Father has no imperfections or failures. He is the perfect model of what a father should look like and our example as earthly fathers of what to be like with our children. When those hard times come as an adoptive parent, lean on your heavenly Father.

### **A Few Final Thoughts...**

If you are at all feeling led to adopt, I highly encourage you to speak to an adoption agency or at least to talk with people in your church or whom you know that have adopted. This is not something to embark upon without much prayer and research. If you are being led by God to adopt, by all means do so. There are many children languishing in foster care and in orphanages in our country and around the world. We are called by God to reach out to these children in need. If you are not being called by God to adopt, you can definitely play a part in someone else’s journey. Individuals or churches can help out financially given the exorbitant costs often associated with adoptions, especially of children overseas. Take up collections of clothes, diapers, toys and anything else to help future adoptive parents. By all means if nothing else, pray for those going on this journey.

Adopting our daughter was one of the best decisions we ever made. There have been many rough patches along the way, but through those times we have grown closer to our daughter and we are seeing her grow up to be a wonderful teenage girl, full of love for God and others.

## Speaking About Life: Ministering to Those Facing an Abortion and Helping the Church Be About Life

By Dave Jenkins



**Few issues are as talked about as the issue of an abortion or as least understood as abortion.** Life is im-

portant and special, since the Lord God breathed life into Adam, and into the lives of every human being since. Abortion is murder because the Lord breathes

His life into every human, whom He created in His image and likeness. Abortion is an issue of worldviews as people from across the political, religious, theological, and philosophical spectrum have divergent opinions and genuinely believe their position to be the “right one”. More important than opinion is the Truth from the mouth of the Creator, who created, gave life, and sustains life. In this article, I intend to trace ways that Christians should speak about life and minister to those facing an abortion for the purpose of helping the Church be about life from it’s beginning to the grave. To do this we’ll first consider what an abortion is; secondly, look at biblical evidence for the pro-life position; third, why abortion is wrong; fourth, statistics on abortion; and finally why Christians must stand up and speak out on ethical issues.

### **What is an Abortion?**

First, what is an abortion? Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy by the removal of a fetus/embryo from the uterus, resulting in or

causing its death. Abortions include procedures of various kinds, as well as RU-486 and the morning after pill. Other items that cause abortions are the intrauterine devices (IUD). The result is an abortion, the killing of a conceived person.

### **Biblical Evidence for the Pro-Life Position**

Second, what is the Biblical evidence for pro-life position? The Jews believed that an abortion of a preborn child and exposure of a born child are both murderous sins. God created Life and breathed Life into Adam. Genesis 2:7, "Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." God created man and woman for the purpose of procreation. Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

The Bible makes it clear that the killing of a person created in God's image is *murder*. Exodus 20:13, "You shall not murder." The word murder is the transliterated word ***ratsach***, and according to Strong's dictionary it means, "To murder, slay, kill, premeditated, accidental, as avenger, slayer intentional, and to assassinate. The Didache, an ancient manual for church instruction said, "You shall not commit murder. You shall not procure abortion, nor commit infanticide." There is a difference between a child in a mother's womb and one outside of it yet and the early church saw both as equally living people and taking the life as murderous.

Charles H.H Scobie said, "Scripture uses the Greek word ***brephos*** for Elizabeth's unborn child (Luke 1:41; 44), unborn Jesus in Mary's womb (Luke 2:12), and also for the children brought to Jesus (Luke 18:15)." God in His Word reveals that a child in the womb and a child singing and dancing around in worship are equally human beings, who bear the image of God. Abortion is wrong because it is the killing of an unborn child created in the image and likeness of God.

### **Statistics on Abortion**

Third, we must examine the statistics on abortion. In the United States there are **1.37 million abortions every year**, and approximately 3,700 everyday (The Alan Guttmacher Institute and Planned

Parenthood's Family Planning Perspectives.). 1% of all abortions occur because of rape or incest; 6% of abortions occur because of potential health problems regarding either the mother or child, and **93% of all abortions occur for social reasons** (i.e. the child is *unwanted* or *inconvenient*). (The Alan Guttmacher Institute and Planned Parenthood's *Family Planning Perspectives*). Who's having an abortion? Women identifying themselves as Protestants obtain 37.4% of all abortions in the U.S.; Catholic women account for 31.3%, Jewish women account for 1.3%, and women with no religious affiliation obtain 23.7% of all abortions. 18% of all abortions are performed on women who identify themselves as "Born-again/Evangelical" (The Alan Guttmacher Institute and Planned Parenthood's Family Planning Perspectives).

### Helping the Church Be About Life

Christians must stand up on ethical issues and proclaim God's Word. God's Word reveals His will in regards to theological, moral, and ethical issues like abortions. President Barack Obama, in a speech on the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, said, "We are reminded that this decision not only protects women's health and reproductive freedom, but stands for a broader principle: that government should not intrude on our most private family matters."

Jesus taught believers that they are to be "salt and light" (Matthew 5:13). The Lord created life when He breathed into Adam's nostrils and breathes life into every human being since. Christians have a biblical and moral obligation to speak out on social issues, especially issues such as life. With all due respect to President Obama, *abortion is murder* and God will intrude and deal with those who murder innocent children in the womb.

Christians are to be known as people of the Book who regularly open the Bible to read, meditate, study, and apply what it teaches to their lives. Abortion is murder because God says so. The Lord created life when He breathed into Adam. The Creator is the One who gives Life. I urge you to call your elected officials and tell them pro-choice is no choice at all. Know what your elected officials (and candidates) believe about social and ethical issues. Do not vote for candidates who do not



have a biblical worldview.

To prevent abortion it is necessary that Christians stand upon God's Word and fight for the unborn. Remember the truth about abortion and what it *really* is—murder. I challenge you to apply what you have learned about the importance of a biblical worldview regarding life. I challenge you to go out and make a difference for the cause of the unborn who are dying every day. I challenge you to speak up often and with every chance you get regarding God's plan to give life.

### **Ministering To Those Facing an Abortion**

Now that we've consider what an abortion is and how to speak about an abortion, we need to consider how to minister to those who have had an abortion, along with how the Church should speak about this issue.

First, the Church must explain to fathers and mothers the importance of life. Women contemplating abortion do so for a variety of reasons, such as financial and emotional. Yet, God has something to say about these reasons. God is the great Provider, who provides for those who trust Him. So aborting a child because you can't afford to care for a child is isn't a valid reason. Having an abortion for emotional reasons, because you think you won't be able to survive emotionally, is not a valid reason. If you were emotionally strong enough to have intercourse, then you are responsible for the bearing of and raising your child, instead of murdering the innocent one.

It's the last issue, the emotional one, which is the most complex. People's emotions are fickle. One person might feel good about themselves one day and the next day, they might be down in the dumps. When I call those contemplating having an abortion to be responsible, I'm not dismissing how they feel, but rather trying to help you understand the seriousness of your choice. The child that is in your womb, mothers, is a *precious gift from the Lord*. The child in your womb has God-given talents, abilities, and gifts that God has uniquely given to your baby to bless the world. God desires for your baby to come to a saving knowledge of Himself. God has a plan to use your baby in His world to draw people to Jesus, and use them powerfully for His Kingdom.

Sadly babies are killed every day. Some 60 million children in the

United States, according to some statistics, have been killed. That is more than *everyone* who was killed in World War II *combined*. In the case of abortion, the death counter hasn't stopped because of war. Instead, the war on babies continues by killing them in favor of a woman's right to choose.

When women "choose" to have an abortion, they earnestly believe they are making a choice that is best for themselves. What they fail to understand is what is best for their family (which extends to the baby inside) is to bring the child to full term. In addition to this, they fail to keep in mind the benefits of their child upon society. Since every child is unique, every child can make a difference for the Kingdom of God.

The choice to not have a child that you've conceived is morally and ethically wrong. The child in the womb is a child created in the image of God. It is a living, breathing human being, worthy of the parents' and society's respect. Sadly, the American liberal media and those holding to a liberal political philosophy, want Americans to support their worldview. At the heart of the political liberal thought is the idea that everyone has a "choice" to do with their life as they see fit. From this vantage point, everyone is right in their own eyes so they can make whatever choice they want. This means someone can choose to have an abortion with no moral or ethical consequences, after all they decided that was "right for them".

Using this same logic, why do these political liberals even believe in having prisons? Why lock up those who commit crimes if people have a choice to have an abortion? In a moral philosophy class at a secular school in Western Washington, I was taught that if you could use an extreme example to disprove an argument, then you could disprove the pro-life position. By their own admission, those adhering to a liberal political philosophy have to admit that the pro-choice viewpoint fails at a fundamental level to deal with the reality of life. People have intercourse for a reason—to enjoy the pleasure of it. By excusing the role of responsibility in intercourse (that is childbirth and parenthood), we're setting a dangerous precedent for our society, and at worst we're destroying the traditional family, which at the heart has a man, a woman, and a child in it.

It gets even more interesting as those adhering to a political liberal philosophy are those who have kids, while telling others they have the right to choose to get rid of the kid. The lack of logic and outright hypoc-

risy on this viewpoint is telling. On the one hand, they teach others to do away with life, while they have kids and families of their own. At the heart of this discussion on abortion and life is the Bible. The Bible isn't a manual of opinions, or a book of fairytales—it is the *Truth*. It speaks to us about life for this very reason. It instructs us so that we will know what God has said. Our response to what God has said must be *obedience* to His Word.

At the heart of our discussion on abortion, and how to respond and minister to people who have had an abortion (or who are considering doing so), is to understand that these are people (just like us), made in the image and likeness of God. Thus, they are worthy of dignity and respect. Whether you are politically liberal or political conservative or somewhere in-between, you need the Gospel. You need to see that life is not option—it is special, created in the image of God, and worthy of dignity and respect.

If you've had an abortion, you are not beyond the Gospel. Yes, you've sinned and killed an innocent child, created in the image and likeness of God. Yes, you've done what is wrong in the sight of God. You need to understand that you deserve to be punished, but God has instead intervened on your behalf. Jesus was born in a manger as the God-Man. He lived a sinless life for you and me. He was beaten and scourged. He was tried as a criminal and convicted of crimes He never committed. He died the death of a criminal in the most gruesome style the world has ever known for your sins against God. Jesus died the death of crucifixion you deserved in your place, in order to make possible your redemption and reconciliation with God.

**Whether you've had an abortion, or you've committed any other sin, you are not beyond hope.** If you've counseled someone to have an abortion in the past, there is forgiveness at the cross of Christ for your sin against God. There is hope for you today in the blood of Jesus. Christ didn't just stay dead. They were not able to find His body anywhere because He was buried for three days and *rose again on the third day*. Jesus is a victorious, triumphant, and exalted Savior and King.

As we conclude this article, I want you to examine your life today. Do you truly support the cause of life? Do you stand on the side of life and liberty, or do you stand on the side of choice? Today you have a

choice to make—a *real* choice. The choice you make today affects more than whether you will have an abortion or not. I believe that if you're born again, God will change your heart, which will change your choice about life. God promises to give you a new heart with new desires. He'll take your heart of stone and replace it with a new heart with new desires for Himself. This is what Jesus desires for you today. He desires to make you a new creation in Christ.

**Won't you stop fighting against the God who loved you so much that He sent His Son to die in your place?**

Yes, you might disagree with me on whether life is special and important, and whether you have a choice to choose. Unless God illuminates these truths, you will not have eyes to see nor ears to hear what I've said to you today in this article. So I'm praying for you, as you read this issue, that God will give you ears to hear and eyes to see, all so you might come to know the precious gift of God in Jesus Christ. It is there that we begin, because He is the Giver of life. He loves you so much He gave up His life so you could have life.

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## Recommended Books on Adoption and Abortion

This season at [Servants of Grace](#), we've been considering the topic of abortion and adoption. We are living in a time many people are rediscovering the adoption and practice of adoption, along with understanding the horrors of abortion. With this issue of Theology for Life Magazine, it was our hope that readers would grow, not only in their understanding of these biblical truths and their impact for our Christian lives and ministries.

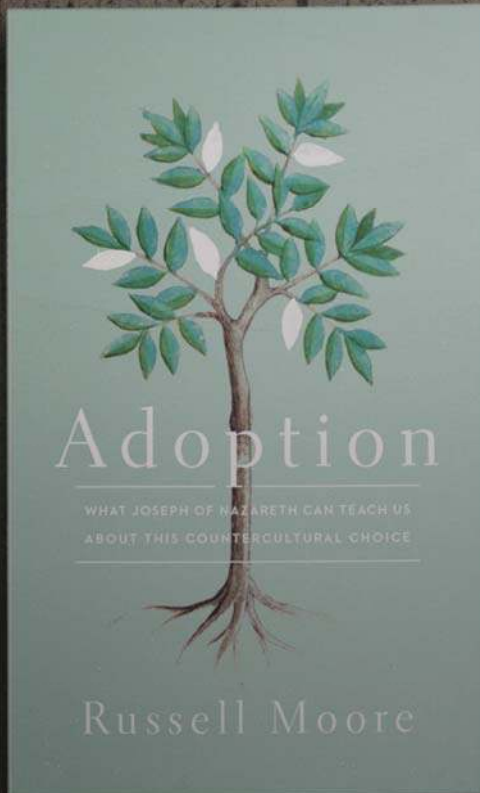
If you've found this subject interesting and want to study the issue further, please check out the recommended reading list below. These books are at the top of this genre in both excellence and readability. I promise you'll find them worthwhile. Please note that this list is provided in no particular order.

- [The Case for Life](#) by Scott Klusendorf
- [Adopted for Life](#) by Russell Moore
- [Why Pro-Life?](#) by Randy Alcorn
- [Abortion](#) by R.C. Sproul
- [A Hope Deferred Adoption and the Fatherhood of God](#) by J. Stephen Yuille
- [A Passion for the Fatherless: Developing a God-Centered Ministry to Orphans](#) by Daniel J. Bennett

I trust you'll enjoy these books as much as I have. For more resources, please feel free to visit <http://servantsofgrace.org> or <http://theologylife.org>.

In Christ Alone,  
Dave Jenkins  
Executive Editor—*Theology for Life Magazine*

## TAKE A STAND FOR CHILDREN BORN & UNBORN



### ADOPTION

Looking to Joseph's adoption of Jesus as a model, this short book encourages readers to view adoption as a way to protect children from the injustices of abortion, abuse, and neglect.

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SCOTT KLUSENDORF

**THE CASE FOR LIFE**  
Written by an active pro-life advocate, this book helps Christians make a persuasive case for the lives of the unborn in the face of our morally confused culture.



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### ***Michael Boling***

Michael Boling lives in Belleville, IL, a suburb of St. Louis, MO with his wife Erica, adopted daughter Alissa, two cats Molly and Sweetie Pie and horse Beckham. Michael holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Religion (Biblical Studies) from Liberty University and is currently closing in on completing a Master of Arts in Religion (Biblical Studies) from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an avid reader and the Managing Editor of Servants of Grace.



### ***Brian Borgman***

Brian Borgman is founding pastor of Grace Community Church, Minden, NV (1993-present). Brian and his wife Ariel have been married since 1987. They have three wonderful children, Ashley, Zach and Alex and several grandchildren. He has written several books including *After They Are Yours: The Grace and Grit of Adoption* (Cruciform, 2014).



### ***Craig Hurst***

Craig Hurst is a husband, father of three, and working on bringing another child into his family through adoption. He loves to play sports and read theology of all disciplines. He attends Grace Community Church in Howard City, MI where he and his wife serve in the youth group and other areas of need. He is working on his MA in Theology at Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary in Lansdale, PA.



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Dave Jenkins is the Executive Director of [Servants of Grace Ministries](#), and the Executive Editor of [Theology for Life Magazine](#). He and his wife, Sarah, are members of Ustick Baptist Church in Boise, Idaho, where they serve in a variety of ministries. Dave received his MAR and M.Div. through Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.



### ***Dan Cruver***

Dan is an orphan advocate and thought-leader who loves to empower and equip people “to do justice, and to love kindness” (Micah 6:8) as they care for vulnerable children. Dan co-founded Together for Adoption in 2008 because he knew social causes that are driven by a robust theology can flourish and be sustained over the long-haul. In September of 2014, U.S. Senator Tim Scott honored Dan as his Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) Angel in Adoption™. Dan is also the editor and primary author of [Reclaiming Adoption: Missional Living Through the Rediscovery of Abba Father](#).

## Servants of Grace Ministries

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