

How To Be Pro Life
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What's important to God should be important to his children! What breaks the heart of God should break our hearts as believers!

Today is SANCTITY OF LIFE Sunday.

We might ask on a day like today: How important is HUMAN LIFE to God?

The psalmist posed such a question

Psalm 8:4-5

4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?

5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings [a]
and crowned him with glory and honor.

How important is HUMAN LIFE to God? We need look no further than scripture to answer the question.

The word LIFE appears in the King James Version of the Bible 450 times. Let's review a few of those references:

It all started in the book of Genesis:

Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Life is not of our own making...it was given by God to the first man and it is still given to us by God today. Only God could make a "living soul."

Human life is uniquely important to God because HOW He chose to make man.

Chuck Swindoll wrote:

In Genesis 1:26 we read the words of the Godhead, speaking together, "Let us make man in Our image." ... Only human life — by God's design — possesses the image of God.

As lovely, beautiful, colorful, and full of variety as the plant or animal kingdom may be, none of that has been created in God's image . . . only human life. Therefore ...only human life can walk with and talk with and fellowship with the Creator...Only human beings enjoy this privilege because only they possess God's image.

It should not surprise us, then, when we turn to Exodus 20:13, that we read, "You shall not murder." Why? Because there is something distinctly precious and unique about human life. In God's estimation, it is so precious and so unique He commands that it must be protected, it must be preserved. It alone represents "the image of God."

But God is not concerned with just physical, human life. The apostle John captured this so vividly for us:

New International Version (NIV)

John 3:16-17

16"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,[a] that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 10:10

10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 5:24

24"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

John 6:47

47I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.

1 John 5:13

13I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

God is not just concerned about physical life but ETERNAL LIFE.

Now you may say: "Okay, SANCTITY OF LIFE SUNDAY this will be a lesson on the ABORTION issue...no need, I'm on board, I buy in, I'm PRO-LIFE, let's wrap it up and go home."

But this lesson isn't about that.

Being PRO-LIFE isn't just about the ABORTION issue. It's caring about the lives around us the way Jesus cares for them. Caring for:

- People with needs.
- People with challenges.
- And yes, the UNBORN CHILD.

We'll look at some stories from the book of Mark that show us clearly how much Jesus values life and how much He cares for EACH LIFE.

Mark 3:1-6 (New International Version)

Mark 3

1Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

4Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

5He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

- Last week we said the Pharisees valued TRADITION over TRUTH
- In verse 2 we see that "some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus"...so he gave them something to work with.
- In verse 4 he poses the UNANSWERABLE QUESTION:
 - Which is lawful on the Sabbath; to do good or to do evil, to SAVE LIFE or to KILL?
 - And what did the Pharisees do? REMAINED SILENT
 - Why didn't they answer?
 - If they agreed with Jesus it would violate their own interpretation of the law about the Sabbath
 - If they argued against doing good, they would give approval to evil
 - "Rock...hard place"
- Jesus was confronted with a physical need and He planned to meet the man's need even if it violated the INTERPRETATION of the law by the Pharisees not to heal on the Sabbath.
- In verse 5 it says he was angry and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts
- If they had the power to solve this man's great physical needs, the Pharisees wouldn't have done it on the Sabbath because of their stubborn hearts
- You and I might say "When it comes to helping someone with a special need I don't have a 'stubborn heart'...I'm with Jesus!"
- Maybe we don't have "hearts that are stubborn"; but do we miss out on helping those in need because we have:
 - Lives that are too busy?
 - Or hearts that are too distracted?
 - Or priorities that are out of order?

What's the lesson of this story for you and me when it comes to people around us with SPECIAL NEEDS?

Our lesson commentary says:

“You can easily choose to divert your eyes or ears from those in need. You cannot, however, remain neutral when it comes to mercy. You either give it or refuse it. And your choice says a great deal about your relationship with God.”

- Being PRO-LIFE means caring about the LIVES around us the way Jesus cares about them.

Turn to Mark chapter 5 beginning in verse 21

- Jesus is in the midst of a large crowd
- One of the Synagogue leaders names Jairus falls at his feet pleading:
 - “My little daughter is dying...please come, put your hands on and heal her!”
 - Jesus went with him.
- Then in the middle of the huge crowd and the press of humanity comes a women who had been hemorrhaging
- Not just for that day; or that month; or that year...hemorrhaging for 12 YEARS
- She had suffered for many years, been to many doctors, spent all she had...and still no healing
- In verse 28 she’s thinking “If I can just TOUCH THE HEM OF HIS GARMENT” I’ll be healed
- I won’t bother him or slow him down or make a scene...just touch his robe
- What faith! She was so convinced of Jesus’ power that all she sought was a touch
- So she reached out and brushed her head across his cloak
- And IMMEDIATELY the bleeding stopped
- And IMMEDIATELY JESUS stopped!
- The all knowing Jesus felt that healing power leave Him and asked: “Who touched me?”
- Look at verse 32

Mark 5:32-34 (New International Version)

32But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. 34He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

- What’s the lesson for you and me?
- This woman had a chronic illness and all she needed was a touch
- You wonder if because she had been sick so long, to her friends and family it had become like “wallpaper” or “white noise”?
- When she first started bleeding they might have held prayer meetings and brought casseroles and called every day
- But over time, they were busy...

- And you know she's going to all those doctors...specialists! I'm sure they're helping her
- Did they not notice her battle with pain every day?
- Did they not notice that she never bought new clothes or painted the house...they couldn't see her checkbook but they might have noticed some signs that all her money was gone
- That's the problem with people who suffer with chronic problems...their illness becomes the new normal and we tend to forget:
 - To call
 - To pray
 - To ask
 - To offer
- We can't heal her like Jesus can...but we can do something
- We can be more like those guys a few weeks ago in Mark 2...remember? They were so committed to helping their chronically crippled friend they TORE THROUGH THE ROOF of the house to get him to Jesus.

- As I studied this lesson this week it dawned on me...I'm a pretty nice guy...but I'm convicted that I don't CARE about others as much as I should. Not because I have a 'stubborn heart' but because I don't slow down enough to pay attention and take ACTION.

Being PRO-LIFE means caring about the LIVES around us the way Jesus cares about them.

- What about the rest of this story? What about Jairus' daughter that Jesus was on the way to heal?

Mark 5:35-42 (New International Version)

35While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

36Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

37He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.

38When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." 40But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). 42Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.

- The worst news a parent can hear...your child is dead
- But Jesus encouraged this man
- Jairus, you had enough faith to find me and beg me to come to your house
- Ignore what they're saying
- Verse 36: Don't be afraid; JUST BELIEVE
- Jairus, JUST KEEP ON BELIEVING!
- When they get to the house the commotion is great...the mourners are loud!
- Verse 39 what does Jesus say?
- Break it up! She's not dead, she's just sleeping
- Verse 40 and what do these devastated, sad, loudly weeping mourners do?
 - They laugh in His face
 - Pretty broken up huh? They could turn off those tears in an instant
 - Amazing how those who don't believe in Jesus can go from SAD to CYNICAL when confronted with the truth of who He is
- But Jesus once again demonstrated his POWER OVER DEATH
- What's the lesson for you and me?
- One of the most awkward uncomfortable situations is trying to reach out to someone whose loved one is dying or had just died
- What do you say?
- How do you show that you care?
- You're heart breaks for them but you'd rather just run in the other direction
- You and I can't cure a terminal illness or raise someone from the dead
- But there are some things Jesus did that we CAN do:
 - We can GO...in times like this it's not WHAT YOU SAY it's WHERE YOU ARE that matters
 - None of us is eloquent enough to overcome the pain of death
 - It's not the eloquence of our words but the ELOQUENCE OF OUR PRESENCE that matters
 - We can DO...we can roll up our sleeves and do whatever is needed big or small
 - It's the ELOQUENCE OF OUR SERVICE that matters
 - We can ENCOURAGE...As Jesus said to Jairus... "Keep BELIEVING!"
 - It's the ELOQUENCE OF OUR FAITH that matters
 - We can simply CARE...because...

Being PRO-LIFE means caring about the LIVES around us the way Jesus cares about them.

- Being PRO-LIFE is also caring about CHILDREN both born and unborn because Jesus cares about CHILDREN

One final passage in Mark

Mark 10:13-16 (New International Version)

The Little Children and Jesus

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

- Jesus made it plain...CHILDREN are important
- Not only are they our future...they are a reminder of the kind of CHILDLIKE FAITH we are to all have in Jesus
- In these days of abuse and neglect every believer should be a CHILD ADVOCATE
- And when it comes to the unborn child, I was struck by the way Ravi Zacharias put it last Sunday in our pulpit. (Paraphrasing): Out of the millions of babies killed by abortion how many might have found cures for diseases or advances in technology to better our society? How many Billy Grahams? How many Jonas Salks?
- When I think about it that way I ask "Who is qualified to play God with an unborn life?"

So what's the takeaway?

- Jesus set the example clearly for us. Our hearts should be broken by the things that break His heart.
- We are to express concern for people with special challenges by helping them however and whenever we can.
- We are to express concern for people with chronic problems by reaching out to them and showing them they are important to us.
- We are to express concern for people facing deathly illness by our presence and by doing what we can to comfort them.
- We are to express concern for people and their children by placing high value on those children.
- And in all these situations, just as Jesus did, we are to focus not only on physical life but the gift of ETERNAL LIFE.

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