

Protect and Serve
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Genesis 1:27; 9:1-7; Matthew 5:21-22

Today is our annual recognition of Sanctity of Life Sunday. For many years I've taught on the sanctity of life, this year it's especially personal with a five-month-old first grandchild in our family.

Sadly, when many people hear followers of Christ begin to talk about the sanctity of life, they react with the thought: "Great, we're going to get 'political' today."

Not us! We're not going to get 'political,' we're going to get BIBLICAL. In Bible study we're not focused on positions on issues. We simply look to see what God's word tells us about how He values life, and how that should influence our thoughts, attitudes, and actions every day.

Big Idea: God created humanity in His own image. That should cause each of us to live and act in a way that demonstrates human life is sacred.

As we look at what the Bible says on this subject we'll consider four key ideas and to help us remember I'm communicating them with four "A" words:

Awe, Assurance, Attitude, and Advocacy (which is a big word for speaking up!)

Let's begin in Genesis chapter one at the end of the creation narrative.

In Genesis 1:26 God said: "*Let us make man in our image...*" The "us" being God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then verse 27 states the basis for considering all human life as sacred:

Genesis 1:27 (ESV) ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- Humanity was created in the image of God. The Latin term is “*imago dei*.”
- The very idea that God created each human life in His likeness should promote an incredible sense of AWE in our hearts and minds!
- This verse also makes it clear that God created male and female to be different within humanity, but both genders are equal in God’s sight.
- What does it mean that God created human beings in “His image?” Scholars have a number of thoughts. **What have you learned it means?**
- First, it DOESN’T mean God has a body because He is Spirit (John 4:24.)
- Some scholars think it speaks to God delegating to humans dominion over the rest of creation.
- Another theory is that we are like God in that He is a person not an abstract conception. God has a personality, He thinks, He has emotions, He makes decisions, He has a will.ⁱⁱ
- Others site the capacity God gave humans to discern between good and evil. God made us “moral agents” with freedom to choose good or bad.ⁱⁱⁱ
- One scholar put it this way: “*Being in God’s image means that humans share, though imperfectly and finitely, in God’s nature, that is, in His communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, justice), and so have the capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him.*”^{iv}
- What we know for certain is the fact that each human being is created in the image of God should make us overwhelmed with AWE. In other words, we should be amazed that every human is made in the image of God.
- That should cause me to value every human life as sacred. The first life I should value is the one God gave me.
- David gave God glory for this in Psalm 139:14 (ESV) when he wrote:

14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.
- Truth: Being made in the image of God should cause me to respect and protect the life God gave when He created me.

- That means being serious about the health and safety of my physical body and emotional well-being.
- Another truth: Being made in the image of God should promote a healthy, God-honoring self-image. What does that look like in daily life?
 - When I feel down, discouraged, and unworthy, I need to remind myself God chose to create me in His image. That reality should give me a healthy, godly self-image, but let's don't get too ME focused.
 - A healthy, godly self-image isn't about arrogance; it's about awe!

Psalm 8:4 (ESV) asks, ...what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

- That sense of awe isn't about ME it's about WE.
- Each of us should stand in awe that God created EVERY human being in His image, and how we treat every other person should reflect that.
- We said: God created humanity in His own image. That should cause us to live and act in a way that demonstrates human life is sacred.
- Standing in awe is not just about respecting, it's also about protecting.
- Let's look at God's covenant with Noah after the flood.

Genesis 9:1–7 (ESV)

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. ² The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

- After the flood God commanded Noah's family to repopulate the earth.

- He again reiterated man's dominion over animals and the fact that the natural instinct of animals is to run from humans.
- God specifically made it okay to properly kill and eat animals for food.
- Verse four is about lifeblood, not about how you like your steak cooked. New Testament believers we're released from dietary laws. (Rom.14:1-14)
- These verses don't imply a lack of concern for animals. In fact, dominion over animals and nature means we should respect and care for everything God created because HE cares about all of creation. That said, there IS a difference in the value of human life versus other creatures.

⁶ "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.

- Sincere Christians disagree on capital punishment. We can't resolve that.
- The point of verses five and six is that God commands us to ASSURE that all human life is protected. This isn't just about protecting the unborn child.
- As followers of Christ we need to stand up for the protection of every human life from the "womb to the tomb" and without any prejudice.
- How do we do that? We'll talk about ADVOCACY in a moment. First let's talk about ATTITUDE.
- In the Old Testament God made the protection of human life a matter of law. Jesus made it a matter of the ATTITUDE of the heart.

Matthew 5:21–22 (ESV)

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

- Jesus acknowledged that a command (law) not to murder was appropriate, but He spoke to the ANGER that leads to the act of murder.
- Let's face it, given fallen human nature someone could be mad enough if they knew they wouldn't get caught they might just consider murder.
- That is devaluing human life. It's about pride and prejudice.
- Pride and prejudice isn't just a novel by Jane Austin. The evil in an unchanged heart can easily lead to the pride that says someone's life is worth less than mine. Sadly, we've seen in history that pride and prejudice has caused people to classify some lives as worth more than others.
- That was the crux of the issue of slavery and racism. It was also at the heart of how poorly our society used to treat mental illness and old age.
- Jesus said simply, uncontrolled anger and devaluing of human life is sin.
- Got it! I promise not to get mad enough to kill anyone. Good, but that's not where the responsibility of a believer ends regarding the sanctity of life.
- The last key "a" word is ADVOCACY. It's a kind of stuffy word that simply means speaking up for a worthwhile cause.
- Proverbs 31:8 in the NLT says, ⁸ Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed.^v
- As followers of Christ we are to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. That means the unborn, the disabled, the elderly, those under persecution, those being enslaved, trafficked, and abused.
- Carrie Gordon Earll of Focus on the Family writes about living out our belief in the sanctity of life:

*"The cornerstone of living out this fundamental truth is to recognize the value of our own lives and the lives of others...Do you value your own life as sacred? Do you embrace your worth and significance as one who bears God's likeness? Comprehending this is the first step in embracing the truth of who we all are!
The second is in the way you view others. Do you see others through God's eyes? Does your gaze stop at their physical appearance or ability, or do you look deeper to try and see the image of God in each*

life? Hidden heart attitudes of pride, superiority and contempt prevent us from seeing others with the respect and significance they deserve. Finally, to live out the sanctity truth requires action: to remind those around us of the value of all human life by speaking out for "those who cannot speak for themselves" (Proverbs 31:8). Look for opportunities to talk about and act upon your pro-life views. Teach your children and grandchildren to respect all human life and demonstrate that respect in your own word and actions."^{vi}

- Any other thoughts?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- God created humanity in His own image. That should cause each of us to live in a way that demonstrates our belief that human life is sacred.
- We should stand in AWE (amazement) that God created each human in His image. That should make us respect every life starting with our own.
- We must do everything we can to ASSURE that every human life is protected from abuse, mistreatment, and destruction. Sometimes we do that by intervening in a situation and sometimes by our voice and vote.
- We need to constantly examine the ATTITUDE of our hearts toward other people and other groups of people. Jesus said it's not only about not committing the act of murder; it's about the ANGER that leads to murder.
- Finally, we need to ADVOCATE. Simply stated we need to speak up for those who can't speak for themselves, and do our part to *"ensure justice for those being crushed."*
- Remember, the sanctity of human life is not a 'political' issue; it's about biblical truth! And if we're followers of Christ, everything we do should be in response to biblical truth.

ⁱ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ge 1:26). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱ Explore the Bible – Leader's Guide – Lifeway 2018

ⁱⁱⁱ ibid

^{iv} Ross, A. P. (1985). [Genesis](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 29). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^v Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Pr 31:8). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vi} <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/socialissues/life-issues/dignity-of-human-life/sanctity-of-human-life>