



Lesson Plan: Abortion

For Christian schools and home schools in Canada
(Grades 10 – 12)



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Abortion – How Do We Respond?

[The “5 - Minute Pro-Lifer” article by Scott Klusendorf accompanies this lesson plan.]

One 50 minute lesson

Level – Grades 8 - 12

Applicable Courses: Social Studies, Worldview Studies, Sociology, Bible, Science, Biology

Overview for Teachers – It is difficult to talk about abortion in Canada because it is a moral issue with two strongly opposing views. But it must be talked about because in the centre of the debate are the life of a child and the well-being of a pregnant woman. After years of legalized abortion, countless people have been hurt because of it – either directly or indirectly. This applies within our churches as well. As a result, this lesson must be delivered with sensitivity, realizing that students in the room may be a whole lot closer to this issue than we may expect.

There is no doubt that abortion is evil. It usually involves the purposeful destruction of human life for the sake of personal convenience. All human life is special in God’s eyes. He made humans separate from the rest of creation and also warned us to respect human life “for in the image of God has God made man.” (Gen 9: 6) Abortion is a choice to destroy a human that God miraculously created in the womb. The legality or ease of a choice does not make it right or justifiable. God’s command against murder applies to everyone, including the unborn who are the most vulnerable.

In Canada, close to 100,000 unborn children are aborted every year. Looking globally, an estimated *126,000 unborn children die every day* because of abortion. It is hard to think about how huge those numbers are. Compare them to the size of some cities in your area (for the Canadian figure) or countries in the world (for the international number).

There are no laws that limit abortion in Canada. Abortions are allowed until the child is outside of his or her mother. This is a result of the Supreme Court of Canada striking down the already weak abortion law in 1988 with the case involving Canada’s notorious abortionist Dr. Henry Morgentaler. The absence of abortion laws means that they could be performed for any reason, including choosing the sex or physical traits of a child. It also means that school-aged girls can have abortions without their parents ever knowing about it.

But What Can Be Done?

There are three general approaches that the pro-life community has used to respond to abortion:

- **Pastoral Approach:** This involves combating abortion by reaching out to the women who are considering an abortion and offering them the support they need to carry their

baby to term. Pregnancy care centres are located in communities across the country and work to bring a positive pro-life message to women. There are also toll-free phone lines and websites directed towards pregnant women. The pastoral approach emphasizes compassion and assistance. Some can provide information on adoption, counselling, or even ultrasounds.

- **Prophetic Approach:** This involves speaking to our nation to make abortion unthinkable. Prophets in the Old Testament spoke out against evil and injustice to awaken the people and urge them to repentance. In our age, some pro-life groups are taking a similar approach by showing our world what abortion really is. This can include showing graphic pictures of abortion at university campuses (known as GAP displays), erecting billboards which draw awareness to the health effects of abortion on women, and having public debates about abortion.
- **Political Approach:** Abortion is prevalent partly because the law allows it to happen. Some pro-lifers try to limit abortion by promoting laws which make it more difficult to have an abortion. For example, a law could require a woman to be told about the potential health effects of having an abortion including a higher risk of suicide, breast cancer, and complications with future pregnancies. In the United States these laws have resulted in a decrease in the number of abortions.

What can Christians do? In our daily lives we can demonstrate a pastoral, prophetic, and political approach. We can reach out to help women who may be considering an abortion, we can speak to our friends who may be OK with abortion, and we can use our democratic freedom to bring a pro-life message to our government. Doing this requires that we are comfortable with giving a pro-life message. That is why this lesson is so important. It provides simple tools that students can use in their daily lives to speak up for the unborn.

For Further Study:

www.abort73.com: This website is packed with resources, online videos, and information that is suitable for a teen audience. Be warned, some of the pictures and videos are graphic and disturbing because they detail abortion realistically.

www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/ab-canada.html: Abortion Statistics for Canada, from year to year. There is also a link to provincial data and regional data within each province.

www.caseforlife.com: Arguments against abortion.

Procedure

- 1) Begin by asking students some questions. Try to encourage a number of responses before giving the answer (from above):
 - a. How many abortions happen every year in Canada? In the World?
 - b. Up to what point in pregnancy is an abortion legal in Canada?
 - c. Why do people have abortions?
- 2) Try to use the discussion from these questions to introduce some of the other facts included in the overview (above). It should be impressed upon them that this is not

- just an interesting moral issue but a matter of life and death. If we are willing to risk our lives to save somebody who we see dying, what are we willing to do about abortion?
- 3) Ask students about ways that pro-lifers can respond to abortion. Introduce the three basic approaches (pastoral, prophetic and political).
 - 4) Ask a couple of more questions that typically come from a pro-abortion perspective to make students realize the difficulty of defending the pro-life view. For example, “Why can’t I make my own choice because it is my body and my pregnancy?” or “This is just an embryo, a little clump of cells. What is wrong with getting rid of it if it’s just a potential human?”
 - 5) Distribute the article from Scott Klusendorf titled “The 5-Minute Pro-Lifer.” Go over as much of it as you think is appropriate for your class. Be sure to include the section explaining the SLED acronym. Also, be sure that they realize that the point about people being free to choose their own religion is referring to religious freedom in a political sense rather than a view that religions are arbitrary or that there is no true one.
 - 6) Have the students summarize the article and convert the information to a different format:
 - a. Poster
 - b. Pamphlet
 - c. PowerPoint

This can be done individually or in small groups.

[Permission has been obtained from Life Training Institute to use this article with this lesson plan.]

THE 5-MINUTE PRO-LIFER

Making the Case for Life...Like It's Never Been Heard Before

Issue #1 - How to Defend Your Pro-Life Views in 5 Minutes or Less

By Scott Klusendorf [Life Training Institute: www.prolifetraining.com]

Suppose that you have just five minutes to graciously defend your pro-life beliefs with friends or classmates. Can you do it with rational arguments? What should you say? And how can you simplify the abortion issue for those who think it's hopelessly complex?

Here's how to succeed in three easy steps:

1) Clarify the issue. Pro-life advocates contend that elective abortion unjustly takes the life of a defenseless human being. This simplifies the abortion controversy by focusing public attention on just one question: Is the unborn a member of the human family? If so, killing him or her to benefit others is a serious moral wrong. It treats the distinct human being, with his or her own inherent moral worth, as nothing more than a disposable instrument. Conversely, if the unborn are not human, killing them for any reason requires no more justification than having a tooth pulled.

In other words, arguments based on “choice” or “privacy” miss the point entirely. Would anyone that you know support a mother killing her toddler in the name of “choice and who decides?” Clearly, if the unborn are human, like toddlers, we shouldn't kill them in the name of choice any more than we would a toddler. Again, this debate is about just one question: What is the unborn?

At this point, some may object that your comparisons are not fair—that killing a fetus is morally different than killing a toddler. Ah, but that's the issue, isn't it? Are the unborn, like toddlers, members of the human family? That is the one issue that matters.

Remind your critics that you are vigorously “pro-choice” when it comes to women choosing a number of moral goods. You support a woman's right to choose her own doctor, to choose her own husband, to choose her own job, and to choose her own religion, to name a few. These are among the many choices that you fully support for women. But some choices are wrong, like killing innocent human beings simply because they are in the way and cannot defend themselves.¹ No, we shouldn't be allowed to choose that.

2) Defend your pro-life position with science and philosophy. Scientifically, we know that from the earliest stages of development, the unborn are distinct, living, and whole human beings. Leading embryology books confirm this.² Prior to his abortion advocacy, former Planned Parenthood President Dr. Alan Guttmacher was perplexed that anyone, much less a medical doctor, would question this. "This all seems so simple and evident that it is difficult to picture a time when it wasn't part of the common knowledge," he wrote in his book *Life in the Making*.³

Philosophically, we can say that embryos are less developed than newborns (or, for that matter, toddlers) but this difference is *not* morally significant in the way abortion advocates need it to be.

Consider the claim that the immediate capacity for self-awareness bestows value on human beings. Notice that this is not an argument, but an arbitrary assertion. Why is some development needed? And why is this particular degree of development (i.e., higher brain function) decisive rather than another? These are questions that abortion advocates do not adequately address.

Put simply, there is no morally significant difference between the embryo you once were and the adult you are today. Differences of size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency are not relevant such that we can say that you had no rights as an embryo but you do have rights today. Think of the acronym **SLED** as a helpful reminder of these non-essential differences:⁴

Size: True, embryos are smaller than newborns and adults, but why is that relevant? Do we really want to say that large people are more human than small ones? Men are generally larger than women, but that doesn't mean that they deserve more rights. Size doesn't equal value.

Level of development: True, embryos and fetuses are less developed than you and I. But again, why is this relevant? Four year-old girls are less developed than 14 year-old ones. Should older children have more rights than their younger siblings? Some people say that self-awareness makes one human. But if that is true, newborns do not qualify as valuable human beings. Six-week old infants lack the immediate capacity for performing human mental functions, as do the reversibly comatose, the sleeping, and those with Alzheimer's disease.

Environment: Where you are has no bearing on *who* you are. Does your value change when you cross the street or roll over in bed? If not, how can a journey of eight inches down the birth-canal suddenly change the essential nature of the unborn from non-human to human? If the unborn are not already human, merely changing their location can't make them valuable.

Degree of Dependency: If viability makes us human, then all those who depend on insulin or kidney medication are not valuable and we may kill them. Conjoined twins who share blood type and bodily systems also have no right to life.

In short, it's far more reasonable to argue that although humans differ immensely with respect to talents, accomplishments, and degrees of development, they are nonetheless equal because they share a common human nature.

3) Challenge your listeners to be intellectually honest. Ask the tough questions. When critics say that birth makes the unborn human, ask, "How does a mere change of location from inside the womb to outside the womb change the essential nature of the unborn?" If they say that brain development or higher consciousness makes us human, ask if they would agree with Joseph Fletcher that those with an IQ below 20 or perhaps 40 should be declared non-persons? If not, why not? True, some people will ignore the scientific and philosophic case you present for the pro-life view and argue for abortion based on self-interest. That is the lazy way out. Remind your critics that if we care about truth, we will courageously follow the facts wherever they lead, no matter what the cost to our own self-interests.

[1] Gregory Koukl, *Precious Unborn Human Persons* (Lomita: STR Press, 1999) p. 11.

2 See T.W. Sadler, *Langman's Embryology*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1993) p. 3; Keith L. Moore, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* (Toronto: B.C. Decker, 1988) p. 2; O'Rahilly, Ronand and Muller, Pabiola, *Human Embryology and Teratology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley-Liss, 1996) pp. 8, 29.

3 A. Guttmacher, *Life in the Making: The Story of Human Procreation* (New York: Viking Press, 1933) p. 3.

4 Stephen Schwarz, *The Moral Question of Abortion* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1990) p. 18.