

The Word on the Womb

Genesis 1:1, 26-27

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I was deeply saddened and sickened even, to hear about an “After School Satan Club” at an elementary school in Moline. Whatever else we can say about this, it must be stated clearly that Satan is real, he is liar, a thief, and a murderer...and he targets children who are fearfully and wonderfully made. As I considered how best to respond, I was led to type out a prayer I posted on Facebook and prayed on Moody Radio. I invite you to pray it with me now.

Almighty God, we thank you that you are the victor and though Satan is a liar, a thief, and a murderer, he is a vanquished foe. We affirm that Jesus has defeated death, depravity, and the devil through His substitutionary death on the cross and glorious resurrection from the dead.

We come before you today on behalf of our community and ask for protection for precious students made in your image. May the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ continue to be spread through groups like Good News Clubs and Quest Clubs in our elementary schools, along with Young Life and Fellowship of Christian Athletes in our high schools.

Stir within parents and grandparents to live for you so they can imprint your Word on the hearts of the next generation. May you use this situation to alert parents to the reality of evil so they will introduce their kids to the life-changing message of the gospel. Continue to equip children’s ministry directors and youth pastors in our churches as they seek to evangelize and equip students. We ask that those teachers, staff, and administrators who are followers of Christ will continue to represent you well, using their positions as platforms for ministry.

We pray against the devil and his demons, recognizing that the real battle in this present darkness is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Remind us to take up the spiritual armor you have provided for us so we can withstand evil by standing firm in Christ.

We pray specifically that parents will not send their children to the “After School Satan Club” and that this group will not gain any traction in our schools.

Awaken us Lord to the need for revival and mobilize your followers to live on mission for your glory and for the good of our community. We pray this in the mighty, matchless name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

You can either believe what the Bible teaches, and swim against the current of our culture; or you can follow the crowds and be at odds with God.

Perhaps you've heard of the new law in Canada which deals with "conversion therapy." Bible-preaching pastors in Canada are concerned this law could adversely affect churches which teach a biblical understanding of sexuality. In unity and solidarity with these pastors, I, along with many pastors from the United States, are standing with Canadian Christians this weekend.

Here's part of a statement prepared by the Canadian Religious Freedom Summit which was read by pastors across Canada last Sunday.

"Along with church leaders of like conviction across Canada, we stand before you today to pledge that we are committed to obeying God above all others (Acts 5:29). With the Lord's help, we will continue to proclaim the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) without fear or favour.

"This includes God's life-giving design for human beings, made in His image, male and female (Genesis 1:27), with sexual intimacy reserved for the covenantal union of a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24). We will continue to issue the call to repent of all kinds of sin and to believe the gospel, knowing that we all have sinned (Romans 3:23), and that salvation through Jesus is the one true hope for the world (Acts 4:12)."

Closer to home, the state of Illinois passed Senate Bill 818 in May 2021, which requires public schools to teach comprehensive sex education to all students, including the benefits of abortion, LGBT relationships, and other topics too graphic to even mention. Thankfully, school boards and parents can opt out.

May our church continue to stand on the Scriptures, ministering truth in a spirit of grace as we preach the life-changing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to our community, to our country, and to the continents.

Sometime during the month of January each year, along with thousands of other churches, we take time to reflect on issues of life, marking the anniversary of Roe

v. Wade in 1973, which legalized abortion in this country. Here are some headlines from the past month which show abortion remains a hot-button issue:

- *Will the US Supreme Court Overturn Roe v. Wade in 2022?*
- *Illinois Governor Repeals Law Requiring Parental Notification of Abortion.*
- *FDA Rules Mail-order Abortions Can Stay.*

For the past 30 years or so, I try to preach on a different text for Sanctity of Life weekend. This weekend I'm drawn to Genesis 1. My aim is to awaken within us grateful reverence for the gift of life as we look at what God's Word says about His wonderful work in the womb. One pastor captures it like this: *"When a human life comes into existence something magnificent has happened – he or she is created in the image of God to last forever."*

Here's our main idea: *Since everyone is made in the image of God, everyone is important to God.*

I see four bedrock beliefs from Genesis 1.

1. Elohim is eternal. Listen to Genesis 1:1, which is a simple declaration of the existence of God: *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* This name for God is *Elohim* and is used more than 2,500 times in the Bible, 32 times in the first chapter of Genesis alone. Most scholars believe *Elohim* derives from the word *El*, which means, "strong." Specifically, *Elohim* means He is the strong Creator God, who is creatively powerful, completely sovereign, and gloriously great.

Many years ago, in his unforgettable style, E.V. Hill spoke at a Promise Keepers event in Chicago on just two words: **"God is."** He repeated this phrase over and over, whispering it, shouting it and daring anyone to deny it. Friends, God is. He is eternal. As Psalms 14:1 says, only those who are foolish doubt God's existence: *"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"*

2. Creationism is Correct. Look at the last part of Genesis 1:1: *"...created the heavens and the earth."* The Hebrew word for **"create"** means "to create out of nothing." *Elohim* brought design out of disorder; He created the cosmos out of chaos; He birthed beauty out of barrenness, and He continues to do the same as He works His wonders in the womb. Let's look at a few more phrases from Genesis 1:

"And God made the expanse..." (7)

“...He also made the two great lights.” (16)

“So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature...” (21)

“And God made the beasts of the earth...” (25)

“God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good...” (31)

3. The Trinity is True (Genesis 1:26). The third bed rock belief from the name Elohim is an allusion to the Trinity. The “im” ending of Ehohim is a plural suffix. Although the name Elohim is plural, it is often treated as a singular noun.

Listen to Genesis 1:26: *“Then God [Elohim, plural] **said** [singular], ‘Let us [plural] **make man in our** [plural] **image, after our** [plural] **likeness.**’”* While this verse alone doesn’t fully develop the doctrine of the Trinity, here we see God is one and yet somehow plural. God, who is eternal in nature, has always existed in three persons.

The word *“then”* functions like a pause or a reflection, *“make”* refers to *“a completed and accomplished activity with a distinct purpose,”* and *“image”* has the idea of *“likeness or model.”* When coupled with *“likeness,”* these two words are emphatic to a superlative degree.

There’s something unique in the way God expressed His desire to make man and woman. He goes from simply speaking things into existence when He said, *“Let there be...”* to *“Let us make man...”* When God wanted to create fish, He spoke to the sea. When God wanted to create trees, He spoke to the earth. But when God wanted to create man, He turned to Himself.

One commentator writes, *“These are some of the most important words in all of Scripture. The teaching that man is the image and likeness of God is foundational for a Christian understanding of human nature, the dignity and value of the person, and for all of Christian ethics...the lives of all human beings have intrinsic, and not merely instrumental, value.”*

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4. Every Person Has a Purpose. Look now at Genesis 1:27: *“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”* The word “created” is used three times and we’re told twice that humans are made in the image of a holy God. Note also it’s God who determines gender. Jesus reinforces this in Matthew 19:4: *“Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female.”*

The true value of something or someone, in an ultimate sense, is found only in the value God places on it. Simply put, every person is made in the image of God and therefore has dignity, worth, and purpose. As you read the first chapter of Genesis you get the sense God is building to a crescendo.

Genesis 2:7 tells us the way God made human life is unique: ***“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.”*** The name **“Lord”** is Yahweh, which refers to Him as the covenant-keeper and **“God”** is Elohim, our Creator.

While God spoke the rest of creation into existence, here we read He **“formed”** the man from the dust. This word was used of an artist carefully constructing his masterpiece. Every single person, from conception to natural death, has innate worth and intrinsic value because everyone is made by God Himself.

Interestingly, the name for man is *“Adam”* and the word for ground is *“Adamah.”* God reached down and personally made Adam from Adamah. It gets even more personal and intimate when we read God ***“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”*** God breathed His own breath into Adam’s nostrils with his own mouth!

Genesis 2:21-23 shows how the first woman also shared in the unique and personal creation of God: ***“So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’”***

One pastor says it better than I can: *“Everything that was true of the uniqueness of the first man was shared with the first woman. And all of their offspring would share that uniqueness as well. This shows us the great value God places on human life. It is His special work of creation; made as it were by His own hands from the dust of the ground; and made alive by the breath of His own mouth. Human life is wonderfully precious to God; and for that reason, it is to be held as immeasurably valuable and sacred.”*

Before moving on from Genesis, listen to these verses:

- Genesis 5:1: ***“When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.”***

- Genesis 5:3: *“When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.”*
- Genesis 9:6: *“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His own image.”*

Tim Keller says, *“Every human being reflects God and therefore, there is rock-solid, objective, irreducible glory, significance, and worth about every human being.”*

We can draw out three implications:

- All members of humanity equally possess an inherent dignity from God.
- Each individual human life is of immeasurable value to God.
- Human life is to be treated as sacred to God in whatever condition it is found.

To help us think through what the Bible teaches about the sanctity of human life, here are 10 Scriptural arguments that the fetus is fully human.

1. The preborn are called babies and children. *“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb...blessed is the child you will bear...as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped with joy.”* (Luke 1:41-44).
2. The life of the preborn is protected by the same punishment for injury or death as that of an adult. *“If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely...if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life.”* (Exodus 21:22-23).
3. Christ was fully human from the point of conception. *“...Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son...”* (Matthew 1:20-21).
4. Preborn children have a propensity to sin. *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”* (Psalm 51:5).
5. God works wonders in the womb. *“Did not He who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb.”* (Job 31:15)
6. The preborn are formed in the womb. *“As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother’s womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:5)

7. Personal pronouns are used to describe preborn children. ***“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart...”*** (Jeremiah 1:5).
8. The preborn are called by God and named by Him before birth. ***“Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name.”*** (Isaiah 49:1).
9. The preborn are created by God. ***“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.”*** (Psalm 139:13).
10. The preborn are known intimately and personally by God. ***“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body...”*** (Psalm 139:15-16)

With the advent of ultrasound, we can now see pictures of the preborn and watch their development, as if there was a window into the womb. There we see the fetus not as part of its mother, but as our neighbor to love.

What’s in the womb is *not* a woman’s body, but a distinct human life created personally by God as an image bearer of the Almighty to bring glory to Him. You didn’t come *from* an embryo; you once *were* an embryo.

There are only four differences between a preborn child and any other human being:

- Size
- Level of development.
- Environment
- Degree of dependency

None of these differences disqualifies an unborn child from being a valuable human worthy of protection.

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I appreciate this insight from a church: *“From the point of conception, the unborn are distinct, living, and whole human beings. From the moment of conception, the image of God is then reflected in this newly formed human, and despite the smallness of this image-bearing person, this is the precise moment in time that an eternal life has begun.”*

God is the creator, and He is intimately involved with us because He made us. His constant concern for us is simply the natural interest that a maker would have in a very special product. He is the owner of the preborn – they belong to Him. From conception on, every child is a creative work of God, created with purpose and deserving of protection.

Incidentally, if you run into someone who doesn't believe the Bible is true, Scott Klusendorf suggests this simple and short appeal, using less than 25 words.

Premise #1: It is wrong to intentionally kill innocent human beings.

Premise #2: Abortion intentionally kills innocent human beings.

Conclusion: Therefore, abortion is morally wrong.

Since God is the Creator of life, and life begins at conception, we're called to be advocates for those who can't be heard. Proverbs 31:8-9: ***“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”*** Monday, as we remember Martin Luther King's impact on racial equality and human rights, let's also recognize we still have a long way to go to protect the greatest of all human rights – the right to life for the preborn.

As a church we celebrate, defend, and advocate for life because we share God's love for the good of people, and we share God's love for His glory. Our new version of Super Saturday is called Super Summer Slam. It will take place three days in a row, July 21-23. I'm happy to hear it will have a pro-life theme. Here is a general description: *“...Kids will discover that life is valuable. From the tiniest to the oldest, each person is made in the image of God—wonderfully designed to know him and live for him!”*

Because Satan is a murderer, he hates all of human life. Listen to this position paper on abortion: *“Satan loathes the imago Dei (the image of God) with every fiber of his being. Every person is a portrait of the God he hates, a reminder that his reign is limited, and his defeat is inevitable...as Christians we must remember that our ultimate fight is not against pro-choice advocates or abortionists but ‘against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places’”* (Ephesians 6:12).

Any abortion affects at least two embodied, eternal souls. It's not just removing a clump of cells from the uterus but the willful ending of another person's life. For this reason, we believe abortion is nothing less than murder.

We must be among the first to defend the preborn and to advocate for those who can't speak for themselves. At the same time, as ones who have experienced mercy, grace, and forgiveness ourselves; we must also be the first to extend mercy, grace, and forgiveness to others.

I am so grateful Elohim continues to recreate today. He loves to forgive and wipe away guilt and shame. Today, He can give you a fresh start if you will turn to Him in faith. Claim the promise of 2 Corinthians 5:17: ***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”***

Approximately one-third of all American women by the age of 45 will have had at least one abortion. I recognize some of you have had an abortion. Others of you have encouraged someone to have one, or even paid for the procedure. I want you to know Jesus can forgive you and heal you.

Last year at the Pregnancy Resources banquet, I was moved when Edgewood member Stacie Hutton got up and shared her testimony. I've asked her to come and share with us now.

Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Let me tell you about what I consider to be my greatest sin, the one that kept me from accepting God's forgiveness for so many years.

My name is Stacie Hutton and I'm nearing my three-year birthday as a new creation in Christ. Mine, like so many others, was a long, arduous journey to salvation because for so long I couldn't accept God's forgiveness. I just couldn't believe that God offered forgiveness for the heinous act of murdering a child. Just as he'd coaxed Eve to doubt God, Satan continually whispered to me, "Do you really believe that God would ever forgive you for such a thing? Don't be ridiculous! His forgiveness isn't for someone like you."

It was about 10 years ago that I discovered that many things I had held to be truths were, in fact, lies. One discovery of truth led to the discovery of another truth and so on. This eventually led me to seek the truth about Christianity. That journey began with a documentary called "Is Genesis

History?" That was followed by watching a docuseries called "Christ Revealed" which contains a multitude of compelling testimonies and video demonstrating archeological evidence that the Bible is indeed a historical account, not just stories that men created out of thin air.

It was at this point that I actually bought a Bible and began to read it. With each session in the word, my hunger for forgiveness grew stronger and Satan's voice became weaker. Until one Saturday night, sitting in the back row at church hearing Pastor Brian's message of salvation, I invited Jesus into my life and finally accepted His gift of forgiveness. For the first time in my life, I experienced a peace that I had never known. The moment I gave my life to Him, he took on all those burdens and gave me freedom in return. What a gracious God!

I'm a member here at Edgewood, as is Kathy Nagel, who gave her testimony here a couple of years ago. She encouraged the congregation to get involved with Pregnancy Resources, whether they needed to do so for healing or because maybe they wanted to help in other ways.

I approached Kathy after the service that evening and got some more information. It was because of her testimony that I decided I would like to volunteer at Pregnancy Resources so that I might possibly help someone to not make the same mistake that I did all those years ago. I wanted to be able to use my former brokenness, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to lead a mother (and/or father) to choose life.

Choosing to end the life of a child, is a journey in which a woman cannot fully comprehend, and is not told, that not only is it physically painful, but it destroys you mentally and spiritually. I would love it, if NEVER another woman would travel down the same path that I did; however, if they have or if they do, I also want to be able to offer them love and help them in their journey to forgiveness with the ultimate goal of salvation in mind.

With all of that being said, in order for a post-abortive person to volunteer at Pregnancy Resources, a post-abortive Bible study is required prior to serving in the ministry. This is to ensure that you are indeed healed and able to help others on their journey. As it turns out, God miraculously healed my abortion wounds the night I gave my life to Him.

Although I thought I didn't need to go through the study for the purpose of healing, it, of course, turned out to be another one of God's enormous blessings. He blessed me with four commendable women with whom I now have a special bond and gather with once a month in sisterhood. Kathy and Sandy are truly a blessing for Pregnancy Resources, and I am grateful for their service. As for the other two women who went through the study with me...They have been believers for a long time and, even knowing and having a heart for God, they hadn't been able to forgive themselves let alone accept God's forgiveness.

With me having just having become a believer and accepting that forgiveness, this was heartbreaking to witness. Throughout their journey I was able to watch the layers of scarring from guilt and shame being shed, one at a time, until finally, each was in a place to accept the forgiveness that is offered by our gracious and merciful God. God truly blessed me to be able to share in these intimate moments with such beautiful and courageous women. It made my heart smile to see their transformation from brokenness, to healed and forgiven.

At the end of the Bible study, we acknowledge our children by giving them a name and having a memorial service. You see, in making that fateful choice, we feel we are not allowed to grieve; therefore, we never experience closure. This simple act brought about the closure I never had and never knew I needed. I named my baby Aubrie and wrote what started out to be a letter to her, but instead, morphed into poem, and I'd like to share this with you now....

Dearest Aubrie,

I owe you so much more than an apology. Instead of choosing you, I chose me.

I didn't think I could go it alone. I was too scared to raise you on my own. From your father and my mother, I had no support. Therefore, sadly, I chose to abort.

I've regretted my decision from the moment you were gone. Because of that decision, from God's love I was withdrawn.

I've always wondered who you'd be...An athlete? A scholar? Just like me? Through the years I've searched for your missing love in all the wrong places. And, because of what I did to you, I felt I couldn't go to Jesus. It took me twenty-eight years to finally admit, that I could no longer run

*from my sin. I needed forgiveness from myself and from Him.
I stand here today knowing I am forgiven. Excited for the day I get to meet
you in heaven.
Until then, my precious child, I'll keep you in my heart. Knowing that when
Jesus calls me home, we'll never be apart.*

*Psalm 32:3-5: For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my
groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my
strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to
you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my
transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.*

*In closing, I just want to say thank you to all of you who donate money, time
or both to Pregnancy Resources or to other ministries similar to theirs. You
are helping to make a difference in people's lives. I am grateful that, even
after all this time, they've made a difference in mine. If only Pregnancy
Resources had been available to me all those years ago. I would also like to
express my gratitude to all who continue to fight to make abortion illegal.
Had I not had man's permission to murder, I wouldn't have broken the sixth
commandment in the first place; and I wouldn't be standing here in front of
you today.*

Friend, I don't know what the Holy Spirit is doing in your soul right now, but I want you to hear this. Edgewood is a hospital for sinners, a safe harbor for the hurting, and an incubator for kingdom ambassadors.

Pregnancy Resources, one of our Go Team partners, has a table set up in the lobby. If you're in need of healing, please talk to one of the staff members. If you'd like to serve in this ministry, they'd love to speak with you.

Let's pray for Stacie and for others who are hurting right now.