



TEACHING ON ABORTION

Why & How for Pastors



“MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED
FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE...”

HOSEA 4:6

“BE A VOICE FOR THE
VOICELESS...”

PROVERBS 31:8

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Introduction

03 What is “Abortion”?

07 Abortion & Women’s Health

14 How Did We Get Here?

19 Why Teach on Abortion?

31 How to Teach on Abortion

38 Appendices

43 Resources

INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday 17th June 2025, the House of Commons voted by a massive majority of 242 to legalise abortion up to birth.

The most seismic change to abortion law since 1967, it was snuck in as an amendment by Labour MP Tonia Antoniazzi to the unrelated Crime and Policing Bill, and passed after a mere 46 minutes of debate.

There is a grim irony to the fact that what this amendment actually permits is DIY, late term, “backstreet” abortions: the very thing advocates said they wanted to stop in the 1960s. Only the aborting mothers are decriminalised here; it will still be illegal for doctors or others to assist in these procedures.

At time of writing this still has to go through the House of Lords to become law, but many in our nation have already expressed their shock and disgust – including self-professing middle-of-the-road “pro-choice” journalists.

Extremists have boosted the temperature rather too quickly, and frogs are beginning to jump out of the pot.

In the Church, too, this extreme turn has sparked something of a realisation, a conviction, even:

WE'VE BEEN ALL TOO SILENT.

1 in 3 women in the UK has at least one abortion, and although we don't have hard statistics for the UK Church, there are indications that the situation is not much different amongst professing, church-going Christians, even evangelicals.

Whilst there might be something of a pro-life consensus amongst the more conservative pastor-teachers (with the important caveat that even they aren't too sure when it comes to the "hard cases"), there appears to be a great deal of confusion in the pews: some 80% of UK evangelicals think that abortion is sometimes justified (according to the Evangelical Alliance's 21st Century Evangelicals) - even when the life of the mother is not endangered.

There is a disconnect here: what God's word teaches, and what most church leaders know, hasn't been reaching the hearts and minds of the majority of the flock.

There has been a blockage in the pulpits.

Pastors are now beginning to wake up to the necessity of speaking into this issue in their churches. And yet, many feel under-equipped, or unsure of where or how to begin.

This booklet is designed to help such pastors.

BREPHOS, 2025

1

WHAT IS
"ABORTION"?



Because it is so consistently shrouded by euphemism ("healthcare"), we need to be clear on what "abortion" actually is.

"Abortion" is the intentional killing of an innocent human being still inside the womb of his or her mother, using drugs ("medical") or tools ("surgical").



MEDICAL ABORTION

**approximately 85% of UK abortions today*

Medical abortions use drugs to kill the unborn child.

EARLY MEDICAL ABORTION

Up to 10 weeks

The mother is given a drug called Mifepristone (RU-486).

RU-486 is a synthetic steroid that blocks the hormone called progesterone. The result of this is that the placenta / lining of the womb begins to deteriorate and the growing child is deprived of oxygen and nutrients. Cause of death is usually suffocation. It is still possible sometimes to save the child after the first drug has been taken if progesterone is administered - look up "abortion pill reversal".

A second drug called Misoprostol is then taken a day or so later. The purpose of this drug is to induce contractions (labour at a very early stage), to push the unborn child out of the uterus. This often happens on the toilet, and the baby is flushed away. The drug will likely cause painful stomach cramps, bleeding (which can last for many days), and sickness, for which more drugs may be necessary.

A mother may see her dead baby during this process. At 9 weeks for example, the baby is almost two inches long and fingers and toes are discernible.

There is a chance of the abortion still being incomplete, leading to risk of infection or severe haemorrhaging which, if not dealt with, can result in death of the mother.

POTASSIUM CHLORIDE

21 weeks and 5 days +

Potassium chloride is injected into the child's heart to ensure that the baby is born dead. The baby suffers a heart attack. As it is likely that the baby will be thrashing around it is sometimes advised that a muscle relaxant be administered to the baby so the mother can't feel her child moving around.

The woman then has to give birth to the dead baby.



SURGICAL ABORTION

**approximately 15% of UK abortions today*

Surgical abortions use metal instruments to kill and then extract the unborn child.

VACUUM/SUCTION ASPIRATION ABORTION (D&C)

Up to 13 weeks

The neck of the womb is forced open and a sharp tipped hollow tube is inserted. The baby is suctioned out of his/her mother's womb into a glass canister, being cut to pieces in the process.

A sharp curved instrument called a curette (essentially a long handled, curved blade), is then used to scrape the lining of the uterus to ensure no parts of the baby or placenta remain.

What the abortion providers tell you:

"Vacuum aspiration uses gentle suction to remove the pregnancy and takes about 5-10 minutes..."

-British Pregnancy Advisory Service

Actually, the suction used in a vacuum aspiration is up to 20x more powerful than the average domestic vacuum cleaner.

DILATION & EXTRACTION/EVACUATION (D&E)

Between 13-24 weeks

Now that the child is too large to be suctioned out, forceps are inserted into the womb through the stretched cervix. The abortionist grabs, twists, and pulls at whatever the forceps get hold of. This is usually an arm or a leg. The limb is ripped off while the child is alive and conscious; normally no pain relief is administered to the baby. There is now little argument that babies over 18 weeks are capable of feeling excruciating pain (they are given anaesthetic for in utero surgery at 21/22 weeks, for example). The cause of death is usually either blood loss, or cardiac arrest.

The head is then crushed with the forceps to allow it to be removed.

2

ABORTION &
WOMEN'S
HEALTH



Abortion is often called “women’s healthcare” or “reproductive health”. These terms are inexcusably misleading, not only because abortion kills a baby (making “safe abortion” a contradiction in terms) but also because it often harms women too, both physically and psychologically.

This is one of the most misunderstood aspects of the abortion debate, and it’s one of the biggest stumbling-blocks for Christians (who don’t want to oppose something that is deemed necessary to preserve women’s health). As such, it is important to present accurate information to counter this (totally inaccurate) cultural perception.

ABORTION IS A RISK TO WOMEN’S HEALTH

Risks from abortion include:

- Haemorrhage (common or very common)
- Infection (common)
- Uterine Perforation (uncommon though not rare)
- Death (rare)

The majority of abortions in the UK (56% last year) now take place in private residences rather than in a clinic or hospital. This has been the case since the Government’s “pills by post” scheme was launched under emergency measures during Covid, and then made permanent.

A 2021 freedom of information request revealed that in the UK 1 in 17 women (550 per month) having a medical abortion were subsequently treated at an NHS hospital for complications arising from an incomplete abortion.

CANCER

The relationship between abortion and breast cancer is hotly disputed in western medical circles but the data demonstrating a link is quite compelling.

Of 76 studies

(https://www.bcpinstitute.org/uploads/1/1/5/1/115111905/bcpi-factsheet-epidemiol-studies_2020.pdf) examining potential links between abortion and the risk for breast cancer, 61 of them demonstrated a positive link with 41 of those being statistically significant.

For example, as Dr John R Ling writes in his book, *Bioethical Issues: Understanding and Responding to the Culture of Death*, an analysis published in 2013 of 36 studies across 14 provinces in China concluded that:

- One abortion increased the risk for breast cancer by 44%
- Two abortions by 76% and
- Three abortions by 89%



PREMATURITY AND LOW BIRTH WEIGHT

At least 49 studies have demonstrated a statistically significant increase in premature births or low birth weight, for babies born after a prior induced abortion. Unlike the link to breast cancer, this is not disputed at all within the medical community.

The main systematic review

(<https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1471-0528.2009.02278.x>) examining this issue found that the increased risk was greatly impacted by the number of abortions.

One abortion carries a 36% increased risk for preterm birth or low birth weight in future pregnancies, while more than one abortion carries a 93% increased risk. Bear in mind that last year, 43% of abortions in the UK were repeat abortions (meaning the mother had had at least one before).

Prematurity and low birth weight are among the biggest risk factors for infant mortality or disabilities (such as cerebral palsy), as well as for behavioural problems.

An analysis (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17977168/>) from the US estimates that abortion is responsible for around 23,000 very early preterm births each year and around 1,000 extra cases of cerebral palsy each year as a consequence. This amounts to neonatal costs of \$1.2 billion each year. Preterm birth is the leading cause of death for children under 5 the world over.

MENTAL HEALTH

Abortion advocates have consistently underplayed or denied any adverse psychological impacts of abortion. Any negative outcomes for a woman following an abortion (which may not arise until years after the procedure) are generally attributed to other factors such as existing mental health problems, lack of support, and other social issues.

However, the data from the most comprehensive peer reviewed studies from around the world show that the opposite is true.

The largest ever meta-analysis (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/abortion-and-mental-health-quantitative-synthesis-and-analysis-of-research-published-19952009/E8D556AAE1C1D2F0F8B060B28BEE6C3D>), consisting of 22 studies covering more than 800,000 women, was published in The British Journal of Psychiatry in 2008. This concluded that: “women who had undergone an abortion experienced an 81% increased risk of mental health problems”. This same study indicated a 156% increased risk for suicide.

The most recent major review of evidence (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23553240/>) was published in 2013 by David Fergusson, who is himself “pro-choice” and the leading researcher on abortion and mental health in the world. This meta-analysis of the best quality studies available concluded the following. Abortion was associated with measured increases of:

- 28% for anxiety
- 13% for depression
- 69% for suicidal behaviour
- 134% for alcohol misuse and
- 291% for drug misuse

Fergusson concludes that: “at the present time there is no credible scientific evidence demonstrating that abortion has mental health benefits,” and yet almost all (98% +) abortions in the UK are performed under Ground C, which claims that the mother’s mental health would be more adversely affected by continuing with the pregnancy than by a “termination”.

Fergusson’s and others’ analysis conclusively proves this to be false, and yet still within the last 10 years both the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), have published reviews or guidelines that state (respectively):

“The rates of mental health problems for women with an unwanted pregnancy were the same, whether they had an abortion or gave birth.”

"Women with an unintended pregnancy should be informed that the evidence suggests that they are no more or less likely to suffer adverse psychological sequelae whether they have an abortion or continue with the pregnancy and have the baby."

Both statements are gravely at odds with the evidence.

The RCOG is deeply politicised and pro-abortion; one is reminded of how ferociously the health risks of smoking were denied by the tobacco industry even as the evidence began to mount. The science is being fudged and ignored in an ideological drive for abortion on demand.

BACK STREET ABORTIONS

Many maintain that banning abortion will not reduce the number of abortions overall, but simply drive them underground; that criminal backstreet abortion will do (even) more harm to women.

Whilst this argument has some intuitive appeal to it, the statistics point to a rather different conclusion.

We have known for a long time that laws that restrict abortion, do in fact reduce abortions overall, legal and illegal (<https://secularprolife.org/abortion-rates/>).

Whilst trying to safeguard protections for the unborn in Northern Ireland, a pro-life group made the claim that 100,000 people are alive today, because of the country's abortion laws. This claim was contested, but the Advertising Standards Agency upheld it as being true.

Even more strikingly, we now have a report on abortion numbers from within the US over the last year (after the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*), and it comes from a "pro-choice" group. Their findings estimate

a net reduction of circa 65,000 abortions in the United States over the last 12 months. That's 65,000 babies saved!

And it's not just good for the babies: countries that have outlawed abortions where they had previously been legal (like Chile, Poland, Nicaragua, and El Salvador) have also seen maternal mortality rates continue to improve in the years following.

It is beyond the scope of this little booklet to explore these issues any further; those interested may wish to use Dr Calum Miller's website (calumsblog.com) as a place to carry on learning about this.

3

HOW DID WE
GET HERE?



To understand current attitudes to abortion it is helpful to know a little of the history.

The 1967 Abortion Act, although it quickly ushered in a genocide of babies at will, was not on the face of it designed to do so. Ideas such as “choice” and “autonomy” did not feature in the Parliamentary debate at all. Of course there were spiritual forces and some human agency pushing for abortion at will – and we’d be foolish not to make the connection between the sexual revolution of the ‘60s and the simultaneous legalising of baby-killing all over the world – but “my body my choice” simply wasn’t an idea being expressed out loud in Parliament in the way that it is by baby genocide advocates today.

Instead, front and centre was the claim that many women were losing their lives to “backstreet abortions” and consequently the practice needed to be legalised and regulated. (At the time estimates as high as 100,000 illegal abortions a year were circulated and believed. Looking back now we can say with certainty that they were many times more than what can be reasonably claimed.)

In addition, a number of physicians had for some time been stretching the definition of what constituted therapeutic, and thus legal, abortion under pre-existing but much more restrictive abortion provision. It was felt that this lack of clarity put practitioners in a vulnerable position.

There was also a great deal of sympathy with the notion that abortion was compassionate in the instance of severe “fetal abnormality”; the recent thalidomide scandal had rocked the nation.

In short, the debate centred around what we may call the more “extreme cases” - life of the mother, fetal abnormality, rape, incest. From this basis, campaigners managed to convince the public that the case for abortion was the case for compassion.

The change in the law was driven in the background by a small core of activists combining radical feminism and left-wing politics: the Abortion Law Reform Association (now called Abortion Rights). The Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) had its roots in the Malthusian birth control movement and drew heavily from eugenic theories prevalent in the 1920s and '30s, which often pushed for mandatory sterilisation of groups or ethnicities deemed "undesirable".

The ALRA was also deeply anti-Christian and saw traditional Christian teaching on sexuality and marriage as oppressive. Co-founder of the ALRA Janet Chance actually wrote that "religious creeds are intellectual crimes." Fellow co-founder Stella Browne who identified as "a feminist and a communist" was still more radical. In her opinion sexual freedom and pleasure required untangling from procreation. Browne believed: "The woman's right to abortion is an absolute right, as I see it, up to the viability of the child," and rejected any veto on this right: "for our bodies are our own." She regarded "forced motherhood" and not abortion as the real crime. Browne, like many other pro-abortion advocates, looked to the Soviet Union as the model to emulate. In 1919 the Soviets introduced abortion on demand up to birth. In 1923 Lenin had to back-track on this policy as the birth rate was plummeting. Browne was so incensed that she cut her ties with the Communist Party.

What is perhaps less well-known, but crucial to what unfolded, was the established Church's murky role in all of this. David Steel gave credit to the Church of England's 1965 Report from its Board of Social Responsibility, which in effect laid the foundations for his Bill. This was a hugely tendentious piece of "research", containing several testimonies from pro-abortion organisations and minimal Scriptural or theological engagement. The unborn child was termed merely "potential life". Child sacrifice was given the green light. Thus the nineteen centuries -long consensus on abortion held by Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches was set aside by the Church of England in deference to the

mood of the times.

The Report finished with a Draft Bill which termed itself the Abortion Act 1965 and was even more permissive than the 1967 Act that was actually passed.

The Abortion Act 1967 provided a list of exemptions whereby, signed off by two doctors, an abortion could be performed without fear of prosecution under the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861. Most of these refer to extreme health situations for either child or mother but crucially "Ground C", under which 98% of abortions today take place, mentions the ill-defined "mental health" of the mother.

The ambiguity of this clause became the floodgate.

In 1968 there were 23,641 abortions in England and Wales (representing 2.7% of all pregnancies). In 2021 there were 214,869 abortions, compared to 624,828 live births in England and Wales. In other words, more than a quarter of unborn children (25.6 %) are now killed in the womb.

It is generally acknowledged on all sides that Ground C abortions - 98% of all abortions today - are what we may call elective or on-demand. There is no (even mental) health issue; the baby is simply for one reason or another unwanted.

What has become increasingly clear is that popular consensus and scientific facts are of little concern for hardline abortion campaigners. This was seen in the Government overreach in 2019, driven by pro-abortion MP Stella Creasy, which took advantage of events at Stormont to impose abortion on the people of Northern Ireland, who do not want it - wholly circumventing the democratic process.

Equally troubling is the chilling of free speech around abortion. Recently, it has become illegal to share information, offer help, or even pray silently near abortion clinics in the UK. Soft totalitarianism is turning hard.

During lockdown (2020) the Government made abortion pills available by post, explicitly stating that this was a temporary Covid measure. Under intense pressure from the abortion industry - who apparently have a hotline to the corridors of power - the Government backtracked on the temporary nature of this policy. Abortifacient pills can now be accessed without an in-person consultation - and this now represents the overwhelming majority of abortions taking place in Britain today. Thousands of women have been harmed, and babies have been killed well past the medical and even the legal limit (the recent case of Lily and Carla Foster).

4

WHY TEACH ON ABORTION?



The following is, in essence, Pete Jackson's talk given at two Brephos conferences for church leaders: "Why I teach my congregation about abortion once a year."

“If I'm going to be brutally honest, the honest answer to this question is: I stole the idea from John Piper. In 2017 we began teaching on abortion once a year. We do so each October around the anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act being passed in Parliament. In some ways I'm still new to doing this and definitely still learning, and I don't want to suggest the exact way we do it is the only way. Though I would say, if you preach it on a Sunday it signals to your church how important you think this is, and preaching provides the context and space to speak at both a pastoral and a 'prophetic' level.

What I do want to make a case for is that however precisely it is done, the pastors and teachers of the church should be preaching and teaching on abortion. I want to focus especially on:

- Why is this part and parcel of the calling and ministry of a pastor?, and
- Why is this something that we should address through our teaching ministry, and not just private counselling or other forms of ministry?

The reasons I want to give you are developed from the reasons I gave our church leadership as to why we were going to do this back in 2017. We sat down and went through it to show that this was connected to what we're about as a church. And because of my own convictions and context these reasons are all rooted in what I would call a 'high view of the office of the pastor.' I believe in the power of preaching, the role and responsibility of the Church in the world, and in our church we have a high view of the church's corporate worship.

It's because I believe in those things that I preach on abortion once a year.



BECAUSE TRUE GOSPEL PREACHING DEMANDS IT

Missional Reasons

We planted Christ Church Walkley over 10 years ago, and one of the things I found was that as I tried to preach and disciple people in the context of our culture's prevailing idols, false gospels and favourite sins, the issue of abortion was never very far away. A lot of our false gods, gospels, and goods converge on abortion. It is a concrete practice where we see these things made manifest, we see where these lead, or in which they are exposed for what they really are. So, yes, I do think that abortion is *the* human rights issue of our era, *the* justice issue of our time. But I also believe that the *practice* of abortion, and the social and legal approval or cover for it, here in the UK is a fundamentally *religious* thing, an issue of worship.

Abortion is a practice (some have even said it is a rite or ritual), a sacrament through which we believe the gods will be at work to give us their promised blessings. True gospel preaching must deal with the *actual* idols, false gospels, favourite sins of our culture. And if we want to get concrete about that, we're going to find ourselves being led to the issue of abortion.

For example:

SEXUAL REVOLUTION

If you want to preach the gospel today you have to reckon with the sexual revolution. Abortion is deeply connected to our society's pursuit of sexual freedom, the way we have dismantled the scriptural vision for the family, the breakdown in co-operation between the generations and between men and women, and our masculinity crisis.

MATERIALISM OR CONSUMERISM

Abortion is also related to the false gods and gospels associated with materialism. What happens when a culture believes that people's true value and meaning is found in their activity as economic agents, when a good job and career is an expectation or even a right? What happens when happiness is bound up in my autonomy and choice as a consumer? (The assumption is that we are what we do, what we earn, what we consume.)

One of the things that happens is abortion. Because babies are costly, and interrupting your career is costly, and your autonomous freedom is so important, and you ought to be able to choose.

THE STATE

The State is an enormous idol in the 21st century. We look to the Government for our daily bread, for the wisdom and rules for how to live the good life. We entrust them with our total peace and security and prosperity. We look to the State to be our Saviour and our Lord. But abortion unmask this idol for what it is. Our relationship with the NHS shows this particularly clearly. This is the Church through which the State, our Saviour, dispenses its saving grace, and there is little we will not sacrifice in order to obtain this grace. Boris Johnson said the NHS was run on love, but still, the majority of the abortions that

happen in the UK happen under the NHS. Sometimes it's in the corridor opposite to where children are born.

PROGRESS

We are progressive people. We are uniquely positioned in the history of the world as the knowledgeable and the wise. We are getting better and will continue to make things better. We are (or must try to be) so much better than the savages and ignorant who have gone before us, steeped in superstition and religion. And yet, when the gods require of us our children as the necessary sacrifice for their promised blessings, we oblige along with the best of pagan societies.

Abortion is a rebuttal of our claim to be scientifically advanced and rational, a blight on our education system and democracy - things we think symbolise our progress and superiority.

We could give many other examples.

I trained for ministry in a time when lots of people in my circles were talking about 'contextualisation' - preaching the gospel for the actual people in front of you. If our contextualisation is going to be more than illustrations from Marvel films, or pop song lyrics, then we want to be, in our gospel preaching, preaching the gospel for the *actual* sins, the false gods we worship *today*, the false gospels we believe *now*. After all, this is where the gospel is at its sweetest in our experience. Christ delivers us from our *actual* sins and idols, not just sin in theory, and not just the sins a previous generation were into.

That is going to mean getting to the issue of abortion in our preaching, or it is going to mean a conscious choice to ignore it.



BECAUSE CHANGING THE CHURCH DEMANDS IT

Reformational Reasons

Abortion is also a focal point for many of the things that need to change in the UK Church and our churches. First, we fall in line with, fall in love with, and fall victim to the same gods, gospels and sins as everyone else. If we're going to tackle these issues within the Church, we're going to get to the issue of abortion. We are guilty of many of the same attitudes towards life, wealth, purpose, identity, marriage, sex and the family, which have either caused or continue to provide a supporting rationale for abortion. Even where we have not participated directly in abortions, we have been guilty of the same sins which have led our culture to abortion.

In fact there's more: because the Church is in the world as salt and light, we bear a responsibility for what the world around us tastes like, and how dark it is. Yes, the sovereignty of God and the mysterious irrational nature of sin... but there is a link between the health and faithfulness of the Church and the state of a nation.

Someone has said that the walls of the Church are porous, so the flow is either from the Church out, or from the world in. Abortion represents a failure by the Church to stay true to God's word and say controversial things. It brings into focus our desire to be liked, the way we've used evangelism as an excuse for compromise. We think the gospel succeeds off the back of our popularity.

The (only truly transformative and effective) answer to abortion is the gospel, and yet somehow the Church has often used 'the gospel' as an

excuse to not talk about abortion. So it's a clear example of where we have stunted the true depth and reach of the gospel (it doesn't extend to that issue), and preached a truncated Jesus (who isn't interested in or sufficient for that issue). The excuse is often given that we don't speak about abortion because it is a 'political issue'. But when the Church refuses to preach the gospel into an issue of injustice as serious as abortion, where the culture's idols come so clearly into view, it reveals we are radically politicised. We have accepted the small (and ever-shrinking) corner that has been given us in today's world. This is our lane and we're to keep to it. But the lane keeps getting narrower. We must not blunt the word of God, truncate the gospel, and restrain the saving Lordship of Christ in order to keep to our lane. If the Church is to be reformed so that it can better be salt and light, that is going to involve preaching and teaching on abortion.



BECAUSE TENDING THE FLOCK DEMANDS IT

Pastoral Reasons

People in our churches work in careers and workplaces where this is an issue, e.g. Midwives, GPs. They are looking for help and support, teaching and discipleship. If we won't provide it for them as their pastors, then who will? What's more, people will take their lead from the preached word.

Silence in the pulpit trains them for silence in the workplace and wider society. How can we expect them to be brave and courageous on this out in the culture of if we are going to be cowards in the pulpit? It is naive to assume that people in our church already think clearly on this.

Our silence on this doesn't leave a vacuum. If we don't teach on it, the culture already is. Likewise it is naive to assume no-one in our church ever has had or ever will have an abortion. People will have abortions because we don't teach on it, and others will carry the guilt around with them because they think our silence means it is so wicked it cannot be forgiven. Women who have been coerced into an abortion, men who have had their child aborted against their will, will think we don't care, or worse, that God doesn't care and Jesus doesn't have anything to offer here.

Finally, the ministry of the pastor-teacher is one of the ministries given by Christ to the Church to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4). In one sense, everything we've said already is included under that. But unless we think that the tragedy and injustice of abortion, and all the surrounding tragedies and injustices, are things Christians don't need to be doing anything about, then that means here is an area for Christian speech and action and service that we need to be equipping the people for. Just as the direction of flow should be from the Church out (salt and light), the direction of flow is from the pulpit out, because it's from the word out. The ministry of the word is given to change and grow and train the people of God for all their other ministry. In that sense we can trace our abortion tragedy right back to the pulpit. The Church is supposed to shape the world, but the Church is shaped by the ministry of the word. So guess what happens when the pulpit is silent on the issue of abortion? It's like we're stemming the flow of gospel grace at the source, and if we can trace the problem of abortion back to the pulpit, the solution has to start there.

And preaching alone is not sufficient. We don't want to just salve our consciences by ticking a box once a year. But it is a start. What I've tried to show is that discharging our duty to preach the gospel, reform the Church and care for the flock leads us to the issue of abortion.

And so I want to finish with a final thought about courage. "Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of highest reality." (C. S. Lewis.) How do you know whether you are really loving, compassionate, truthful, kind, generous? When those things are unpopular, and costly, when it gets tested. Abortion represents just such a point of testing. Will we be loving when the culture will interpret our love as hate? Will we be truthful when the truth will be deeply unpopular?

It's easier to run mercy ministry when the world around us agrees that there's a need that we should meet. But what about when it's something that we're told is none of our business? I'm talking about the pastoral ministry here particularly. It's easy to preach faithfully when the idols are the idols of another culture, or when the sins and injustices you're calling out were from 100 years ago. Will we be faithful to Christ, and his word, and his flock when it is uncomfortable and costly? Why do I preach on abortion once a year? Because it helps prevent me from being a coward.

"BUT WE DON'T DO TOPICAL TEACHING!"

Some will object to the idea of head-on Sunday teaching for methodological reasons: we don't "choose" what to speak on, but rather we deal with what's in front of us as we work systematically through the Bible chapter by chapter.

I am sympathetic to this: if we start taking Sundays out to talk about abortion, who's to say we shouldn't do the same for other issues? Then before you know it, every other Sunday is taken up by "issues", and we never have the whole counsel of God taught in a systematic way.

I am certainly not about to make the case for dispensing altogether with sequential, expository teaching.

However, perhaps we need to acknowledge that almost all of us do preach in a “topical” way from time to time when it comes to weddings, baptisms, Christmas, Easter...

We might also take note of the fact that we see a lot of topical or occasional teaching within Scripture, including from Jesus and the Apostles. They are often responsive, drawing eclectically on the word of God to address certain issues or questions.

The same might also be said of some of the greatest preachers in history: Spurgeon wasn't exactly “expository” in the way that we often mean the term.

Moreover, we do have a little more “editorial input” than we might be inclined to admit: who doesn't prayerfully decide which biblical books to teach, and in what order? I don't think I know of any church that literally teaches through the whole Bible chapter by chapter from start to finish (this would take about two decades) and then starts again. We try to make justifiable decisions as we decide which portions of God's word to bring under focus at any given time.

All that to say, much as we may celebrate expository teaching and uphold it as our general *modus operandi*, perhaps we should be wary of enshrining it as an inviolable law. There may be good reasons to step out of it at certain times.

There seems to be a growing awareness across a number of churches that in order to address adequately certain thorny and sometimes complex cultural issues of our day, head-on teaching is indeed necessary. Many have also taken the decision to teach doctrine head-on. (One well-known preacher remarked to me that this is, for most of us, a harder job than standard expository work, and it is perhaps for this reason that some of us are instinctively resistant.)

If you can only bear to make space for one “topical” sermon a year, let me make the case for why it should indeed be on abortion:

As we noted in our foreword, God’s people are especially ignorant/confused when it comes to this particular issue. I have had countless and very painful conversations with professing evangelical Christians (even leaders) whose thoughts on this issue are far closer to those of the abortion providers than they are to those of Scripture.

A mere aside or brief mention as it comes up in the text won’t “land” if the assumed knowledge or understanding simply doesn’t exist. People may even get entirely the wrong end of the stick: if you say that a certain verse speaks to human dignity or human worth, what of the Christian who has been conditioned by the world to think of “choice” as the very essence of human dignity and worth, and that to deny “choice” is unloving, even bigoted? What of the Christian who believes that abortion is a human right?

Since so many in our congregations have been involved in abortion in some personal way, mere asides may poke a wound without healing it. After teaching on abortion in churches, I have spoken with grateful women who shared that they had had abortions decades ago and had never told anyone before. People are carrying guilt and shame, often alone and in silence. Not teaching keeps them there, and I am not convinced that brief mentions are able to give them what they need.

They need to hear a fulsome application of the gospel over this issue.

There is a particular urgency when it comes to teaching comprehensively on this issue since it represents the greatest avoidable threat to human life probably within our congregations and certainly within our neighbourhoods; there is a safeguarding duty here. And not just in terms of physical lives; spiritually there is great danger if God’s

people are drawn into tolerance of or complicity with this modern form of child sacrifice (Ezekiel 20:31; Leviticus 20:1-5). God takes this issue very seriously; do we and our congregations? It all begins with clear teaching.

Whilst we might be tempted to think of abortion as just one of many issues in our day, it would seem rather likely that in future generations people will look back on the genocide of a quarter of a million children per year in Great Britain, and the Church's relative silence on the matter, with disbelief. It is easier to see with hindsight that evangelicals such as Wilberforce and Bonhoeffer glorified God by their consistent and courageous efforts to end injustice; at the time they would have been viewed with suspicion as "single issue", overly political nuisances. There are indeed certain things that qualify as defining issues of the day, test cases for what we believe and whom we serve. My prayer is that posterity will be able to look back on this period of history and give glory to God that it was indeed his faithful people that stood up to end the bloodshed. In that sense, it should have an unmistakable place in the pulpit.

"If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?"

1 Corinthians 14:8

5

HOW TO TEACH ON ABORTION



Some may feel rather overwhelmed at the prospect of opening up such a thorny and painful issue.

I want this to be as clear and practical as possible, so I will risk being over-directive. You can always of course reject my suggestions!

It probably goes without saying that any biblical teaching on abortion would be incomplete without clear exposition of:

- When human life begins (conception/fertilisation - Job 3:3; Psalm 51:5);
- What makes human life sacred (Imago Dei - Genesis 1:27; 9:6);
- The fact that the shedding of innocent blood is forbidden (Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13).

These simple facts lead unavoidably to the conclusion that:

ABORTION IS WRONG IN THE
EYES OF GOD.

I want to focus therefore on elements that are more easily overlooked.

WHAT TEXT?

Whilst we have made the case in this booklet for the validity of a more synoptic approach to the biblical data when tackling an issue such as abortion, it can nevertheless be helpful to have a key text to open with and to use as a springboard for exploring what Scripture as a whole has to say to the issue. Whilst we might intuitively make a beeline for Psalm 139, which of course is a splendid passage on life in the womb, I would encourage you to consider also passages that focus more on a call to proactive mercy on behalf of the vulnerable, since the problem that many of our people have is that they agree that abortion is wrong

but they don't see how it has anything to do with them: Isaiah 1; Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:19-27; James 2:14-26; Proverbs 24:11-12; Proverbs 31:8.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

I would encourage you to begin by sensitively addressing those who may have had abortions or been involved in some way: reassure them that the gospel is big enough for this. Those who've had abortions will know already at some level that it was wrong, and they may be struggling very much with guilt, shame and secrecy. I think there is a pastoral priority here: we need to start by binding up the wounded and comforting the disturbed, before we may need to go on and disturb the comfortable! Psalm 51 is particularly pertinent here: David shed innocent blood as a follow-on to sexual sin - so often the story with abortion (some 80% of abortions are performed in women who identify as single). The gospel-centred recovery course of our sister ministry, Post-Abortion Support for Everyone, may be of help; do get in touch.

SHOULD I SHOW GRAPHIC IMAGERY?

We have a saying in our movement. We don't protest abortion, we don't need to; abortion when seen protests itself. I am persuaded that there is nothing equal to simply showing the reality of abortion, in trying to get people to understand what it really is.

This is necessary in a way that it wouldn't be with other issues, such as knife crime or rape, because people already understand what those things are and they already agree that they are wrong. When it comes to abortion, even the Christian who has somewhat pro-life beliefs has nevertheless been conditioned by a culture that calls abortion healthcare and the unborn just a bunch of cells. Their moral clarity has often been eroded, and the pictures help to quickly restore that clarity, and move them to compassionate action.

Having shown images and videos in some 70/80 churches across the country, the feedback from congregations is consistently that seeing the reality was one of the most impactful and important elements of the teaching.

For more discussion of the biblical and social reform rationale for the use of graphic imagery, you can take a look at brephos.org.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I INCLUDE HISTORY, LAW, STATISTICS, SCIENCE?

It can be helpful for people to have a general understanding of the historical and legal context, but I would urge you not to get too bogged down in this. I have heard many presentations that focus on these things, but people still come out none the wiser as to what abortion actually is: they still haven't seen it, they still don't really get it, and they aren't moved to meaningful action.

Statistics, on the other hand, if presented helpfully, do form a very important part of the picture. What we are talking about when it comes to the global baby genocide is the leading cause of death worldwide. The death toll since 1967 in England and Wales alone is now over 10 million - more than the Holocaust. Speaking personally, it was coming to learn of the scale of the issue that combined with my already-notionally-pro-life beliefs that moved me to a point of life-changing conviction.

ABORTION AS CHILD SACRIFICE?

The shedding of innocent blood is always wrong, as we have already noted, but child sacrifice evokes an especially strong response in the heart of God (e.g. Psalm 106; Jeremiah 7; Ezekiel 20...).

Whilst different in form from child sacrifice in the Bible, in which babies were passed into the fire, and different in object - the gods of our day are not idols like Molech but rather Autonomy, Choice, Self - fundamentally what is taking place is that parents are sacrificing their own children to placate or feed what they worship.

It is important for people to understand abortion in these terms because it speaks to the spiritual significance of the practice, and the activity and interest of Satan in it - particularly when taking place in and amongst the people of God. One can imagine how a Revelation 2/3 letter might read to a modern-day church that is tolerating or ignoring child sacrifice in its midst.

“DON'T LIKE ABORTION? DON'T HAVE ONE!”

The above is a well-known pro-abortion “bumper sticker” from the United States. The idea is that it's fine for you to not have an abortion if you're personally pro-life, but don't you dare try and tell me not to have an abortion! This sort of argument would be fair enough if we were talking about having your tooth out, but of course becomes totally inappropriate when it is about harming innocent life. No-one says: “Fine for you to be against racism, but don't you dare try and tell me not to be racist!”

Unfortunately, many British evangelicals only go as far as this bumper sticker would allow. They are personally and privately pro-life, but would never dream of trying to dissuade someone else from having an abortion. Indeed, I have spoken with church leaders, and people involved in the crisis pregnancy counselling scene (which has overwhelmingly adopted this “non-directive” approach, though claiming a Christian ethos and receiving support from local churches), who have expressed this very sentiment.

"I would never have an abortion" is good but cannot be the end of the story. Scripture would take us much further: to be a voice for the voiceless, to uphold the cause of widows and orphans, to cry out for justice, to spend ourselves on behalf of the vulnerable and poor. Teaching on abortion that does not include a positive call to action against the wickedness, and on behalf of the helpless, is incomplete.

BEFORE AND AFTER TEACHING

Satan has a great interest in promoting idolatry and the shedding of innocent blood - he hates God and the worship of God, and he hates God's image-bearers - and so he has an especially great interest in promoting modern day child sacrifice, which combines the two, in the Church more than anywhere else. For this reason, please do not underestimate the ferocity and variety of spiritual attack that you may face, from within and from without, if you are preparing to teach on this for the first time. A period of prayer and fasting may be in order.

It's also worth making sure, before teaching, that your leadership team are all on the same page. Again, sadly, this cannot be assumed. You may find lifeaffirmation.org a helpful starting-point for discussing your church's position on the issue.

It would be wise to have some trusted women and men lined up to pray for folks particularly affected by this issue - both immediately after the teaching and also over the following weeks. Don't forget postabortsupport.org.uk.

In terms of literature to help people to think further on this issue, I think the best book from this side of the Atlantic is *For Those Being Crushed* by Camilla Olim.

As you shine the light on this darkness, it may well be that in God's

goodness you snatch a child from the jaws of death, or bring the gospel effectively to bear on someone bound in guilt and shame for many, many years.

May God be with you and prosper the work of your hands as you seek to build up his people in grace and in truth.

6

A P P E N D I C E S



APPENDIX 1

NOTES FOR PREACHING ON ABORTION - TWO KEY TEXTS

PSALM 139:13-16

David depicts the knitting together of his “inward parts” (literally “kidneys”), associated with conscience, discernment, and volition. If Job 10:8-12 focuses on our physical constitution, Psalm 139:13-16 is more about our moral anatomy.

Similar language (“woven together”) occurs in v. 15. Elsewhere this is vocabulary only used of the furnishings or dress worn in the Temple - the womb is holy ground and God is about an awesome work there.

This is not only about David’s creation though. The allusion to the depths of the earth reminds us of Adam’s formation (see Gen 2:7), and by extension all human beings. “Wonderfully made” could equally be translated “set apart” or “distinguished”. Every human life is precious and unique.

God knows us intimately and perceives our personality from the first moments of our existence. “Unformed substance” (v. 16) occurs only here and could be rendered “embryo”. Everything we are and will be is present at this moment, simply waiting to be unfolded over the course of our lives.

LUKE 1:39-45

At the start of his Gospel Luke focuses on the pregnancies of two women and their unborn children. Luke the physician calls John a *brephos* (Luke 1:41, 44), the same word he uses of the new-born Jesus (Luke 2:12, 16).

John is filled with the Spirit in the womb (Luke 1:15), and begins his ministry in utero, witnessing to the unborn and even younger Jesus (Luke 1:41-44).

Jesus is likely just a few weeks old at this point, a reminder that the incarnation begins with Jesus' conception. Jesus is "Lord" (Luke 1:43) and "God with us" (Matt 1:23), even at this stage. In the OT God fashions and loves the unborn child, in the NT God becomes an unborn child.

Jesus's hallowing of the womb sets the tone for how the Church should think of children, before and after birth. Contrast Jesus' concern for infants (Luke 18:15) with Herod's massacre of Bethlehem's innocents (echoing Pharaoh's earlier infanticide).

APPENDIX 2

RELEVANT TEXTS THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE

God's Sovereignty in Conception	Genesis 20:17-18; 29:31; 30:1-2, 22; Numbers 5:11-31; Deuteronomy 7:13-14; 28:4, 11; 30:9; Ruth 4:13; 1 Samuel 1:5-6, 19-20; Psalm 127:3; Isaiah 7:14; 66:9.
Life Begins at Conception	Job 3:3; Psalms 51:5; 139:16; Song of Songs 3:4; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:31.
God's Formation of the Unborn Child	Job 10:8-12; 31:15; Psalms 119:73; 139:13-16; Isaiah 42:2, 24; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:5.
Humanity of the Unborn Child	Genesis 25:22-23; 38:27-30; Judges 13:1-7; 16:17; Job 3:3, 16; Psalms 51:5; 58:3; 71:6; Ecclesiastes 6:3-5; 11:5; Isaiah 46:3-4; 48:8; 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5; Hosea 13:13; Matthew 1:20-23; Luke 1:15; 31-38; 41, 44; Romans 9:10-13; Galatians 1:15.
Violence Against the Unborn Child	Exodus 21:22-5; 2 Kings 8:12; 15:16; Isaiah 13:18; Amos 1:13.

Select Examples of Violence Against Infants; Child Sacrifice, etc.	Exodus 1:15-2:10; Lev 18:21; 20:1-5; Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:9-12; 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 28:3; Psalm 106:37-38; Isaiah 1:15; 5:7; Jeremiah: 7:31; 32:35; Ezekiel 20:31; Hosea 13:16; Matthew 2:13-18; Revelation 12:1-5.
Speaking Up for Vulnerable	Proverbs 24:11-12; 31:8-9; Isaiah 1; Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:19-27; James 2:14-26.
Maternal Imagery Used of God	Numbers 11:12; Deuteronomy 32:18; Psalm 22:9-10; Isaiah 42:14; 49:15; 66:13.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

- Camilla Olim, *For Those Being Crushed*
- Evangel Presbytery, *Abortion and the Church*
- Scott Klusendorf, *The Case for Life*
- Randy Alcorn, *Why Pro-Life?*
- Peter Kreeft, *The Unaborted Socrates*
- Stephanie Gray, *Love Unleashes Life*
- Eric Metaxas, *Amazing Grace*

ARTICLES

- Jonathon Van Maren, *Why seeing abortion is necessary to stopping it*
- Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*
- Debbie Mountford, *We're Christians, Of Course We're Pro-Life, But...*
- Debbie Mountford, *They Said It Was Safe: The Dark Reality of Medical Abortion*

FILMS/VIDEOS

- *Amazing Grace*
- *Unplanned*
- *Sing a Little Louder*
- *The 1916 Project*
- *Stand for Life 2014*: Francis Chan, John Piper, John Ensor

BREPPOS.ORG

Go to our website for Bible Studies on abortion, examples of Sunday teaching, podcasts, testimonies, and other resources.

