

Abortion Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Do you know anything interesting about your birth? Explain.
2. Do you feel comfortable holding somebody else's baby? Explain.

Read the following passage: Psalm 139.

For those women facing an unwanted pregnancy, abortion often feels like the only way out. The Scriptures, however, assign great value to human beings at every stage of bodily development. Every human being is ultimately created by God and belongs to God. It is not our prerogative, then, to take the life of any human being unless authorized by God himself.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Do you have strong emotions attached to the subject of abortion? Explain. How does this affect conversations on the subject?
2. Some people argue that the Christian faith suppresses women. Explain why this was certainly not the perception of Christianity in the first few centuries of the church.
3. Read the following excerpt from an article by journalist Antonia Senior. Do you agree or disagree with her perspective? What do you think are the primary motivations driving those who support a woman's right to abortion on demand? Do you think any of the arguments supporting a woman's right to abortion would also work to support a woman's right to end the life of her toddler? Why or why not?

...my moral certainty about abortion is wavering...

My daughter was formed at conception... forged in my womb, not by my mothering.

Any other conclusion is a convenient lie that we... tell ourselves to make us feel better about the action of taking a life.

But you cannot separate women's rights from their right to fertility control.

...the answer lies in choosing the lesser evil. ... If you are willing to die for a cause, you must be prepared to kill for it, too.

Antonia Senior, "Yes, abortion is killing. But it's the lesser evil."

4. Read the following excerpt from author Scott Klusendorf. Explain why pro-choice arguments are typically metaphysical or religious in nature.

In 1981, a U.S. Senate judiciary subcommittee heard expert testimony on when human life begins. Professor Micheline Matthews-Roth of Harvard University Medical School told the subcommittee, "It is incorrect to say that biological data cannot be decisive. . . . It is scientifically correct to say that an individual human life begins at conception." Dr. Watson A. Bowes of the University of Colorado Medical School stated, "The beginning of a single human life is from a biological point of view a simple and straightforward matter—the beginning is conception." The subcommittee report concludes, "Physicians, biologists, and other scientists agree that conception marks the beginning of the life of a human being—a being that is alive and is a member of the human species. There is overwhelming agreement on this point in countless medical, biological, and scientific writings."

Scott Klusendorf, *The Case for Life*

5. Dr. Bernard Nathanson, who oversaw one of the first abortion clinics in the United States, suggests that he was comfortable performing so many abortions, in part, because abortion is a blind procedure. He writes:

What actually goes on in an abortion? I had done many, but abortion is a blind procedure. The doctor does not see what he is doing. He puts an instrument into a uterus and he turns on a motor, and a suction machine goes on and something is vacuumed out; it ends up as a little pile of meat in a gauze bag. I wanted to know what happened, so in 1984 I said to a friend of mine, who was doing fifteen or maybe twenty abortions a day, "Look, do me a favor, Jay. Next Saturday, when you are doing all these abortions, put an ultrasound device on the mother and tape it for me."

He did, and when he looked at the tapes with me in an editing studio, he was so affected that he never did another abortion. I, though I had not done an abortion in five years, was shaken to the very roots of my soul by what I saw... a twelve-week-old fetus being torn to pieces in utero by the combination of suction and crushing instrumentation...

Bernard Nathanson, *The Hand of God*

Do you think the "blindness" of the procedure impacts women's decisions on whether or not to have an abortion? Explain.

6. Dr. Julius Fogel, a psychiatrist and OB-GYN, performed over 20,000 abortions in his career. Consider his comments given in an interview in 1989. Do you think most women considering an abortion are aware of the potential psychological and spiritual ramifications? Explain.

"I've had patients who had an abortion a year or two ago...women who did the best thing at the time for themselves... but it still bothers them. Many come in...some are

just mute, some hostile. Some burst out crying...there is no question in my mind that we are disturbing a life process. The trauma may sink into the unconscious and never surface in the woman's lifetime...but a psychological price is paid. It may be alienation, it may be pushing away from human warmth, perhaps a hardening of the maternal instinct. Something happens on the deeper levels of a woman's consciousness when she destroys a pregnancy. I know this as a psychiatrist."

7. A very early Christian document (probably 1st century) called the *Didache* (pronounced DEE-duh-kay, meaning "teaching") includes the following passages.

Didache 1:1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways.

Didache 2:2 You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not corrupt children; you shall not be sexually immoral; you shall not steal; you shall not practice magic; you shall not engage in sorcery; you shall not abort a child or commit infanticide. You shall not covet your neighbor's possessions...

What are some practical ways we can promote a culture of life in our context?

Pray