

Webinar #3: "The Ethics of Abortions: Misconceptions and Challenges"

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After reading each misconception and challenge, discuss how this information will change how you have a compassionate and understanding conversation with someone who is pro-choice.

Misconception #1: We Don't Know When Life Begins

Misconceptions:

- Roe vs. Wade: "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer."
- Planned Parenthood vs. Casey: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."
- Neither of these reflect the current state of the science - now or even at the time of Roe vs. Wade.

Response:

- Life begins when sperm and egg fuse. This is the time when a new biological trajectory begins. There is very clear stance on this in all science literature. For example:
- "Human life begins at fertilization, the process during which a male gamete or sperm unites with a female gamete or oocyte (ovum) to form a single cell called a zygote. This highly specialized, totipotent cell marks the beginning of each of us as a unique individual. A zygote is the beginning of a new human being. Keith L Moore, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology*, 7th edition.

Misconception #2: Abortion is about a woman's right to do what she wants with her own body

Misconceptions:

- My body My Choice. A woman's right to choose.

Response:

- The unborn child is a distinct human being, not part of the woman's body.
- We have rights on how to use our own bodies but are limited on how it affects another human body. For example, I can swing my fist, but it ends before it hits your face.
- The unborn child is within the mother's body but again a distinct human being
 - The unborn child has a unique genetic code, different from the mother or father.
 - The unborn child directs his or her own development.
 - The mother's body only provides nutrition, protection, and a safe environment – things which we all need throughout our lives.

Misconception #3: The unborn child is not a person.

Misconception:

- A person only has rights. A fetus is not a person since it has not fully developed those attributes of a person.
- Roes vs. Wade: “the word “person” as used in the Fourteenth Amendment, does not include the unborn”
- “Genetic humanity is neither necessary nor sufficient for establishing that an entity is a person... A fetus is a human being which is not yet a person, and which therefore cannot coherently be said to have moral rights.” – Mary Anne Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion.” Philosophic aspect that is often said by others – fetus are human beings but are not a person with moral rights.

Response:

- All human beings are persons with equal fundamental dignity of rights.
 - If unborn are not persons because of their cognitive ability – then this also includes infants or those with severe cognitive disabilities.
 - This is also the position of some who think infanticide is okay or aborting those with severe cognitive disability.
- All human beings are persons because all human beings possess a rational nature, i.e., the basic natural capacity for rationality even if not all can manifest that capacity. Like a person who is in a coma.
- It is important to note that this thought process that humans are not “persons” has been used to justify slavery, genocide, and other atrocities. African Americans, during slavery, were compared to apes (not fully developed) therefore are not human.
 - “Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to whites; in reason much inferior... and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous” – Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Misconception #4: Abortion is health care.

Misconception:

- If abortion is considered health care, then pregnancy is a disease. Abortion cures the disease, pregnancy.

Response #1:

- Pregnancy is not a disease
 - Women’s bodies are designed to be able to gestate their offspring.
 - The ability to conceive and gestate a child is a sign of health
 - The inability to conceive or to sustain a pregnancy is a sign that the woman’s body is not functioning.
- Since abortion has wrongly been determined as healthcare, this seriously undermines proper healthcare of pregnancy, fertility, woman, and reproductive health.
- Number of doctors have become concerned that the focus has been on abortion, few studies have been done to understand the true nature of women’s reproductive health. Recently, *The Fifth Vital Sign* by Lisa Hendrickson-Jack demonstrates the delicate balance of females’ cycles, fertility, and health of women. It is slowly being recognized in medical arena that reproductive health is an indicator for women’s overall health. (Continue to next page for Response #2)

Response #2:

April 9th Culture of Life Meeting
Church of Saint Mary Magdalene

- Most abortions are elective. Data from Florida in 2018 of 70,000 – 0.27% were related to the woman’s life being endangered by the pregnancy; 1.48% was related to the woman’s physical health was threatened by the pregnancy. 1.67% woman’s psychological health was threatened by the pregnancy. 75.4% No reason (elective). 20% social or economic reason.

Misconception #5: Abortion is necessary for women’s equality.

Misconception:

- Ruth Bader Ginsberg: “the decision whether to bear a child is central to a woman’s life to her well-being and dignity. It is a decision she must make for herself. When the government controls that decision for her, she is being treated as less than a full adult human responsible for her own decisions.”

Response:

- True equality would respect and support women’s unique capacity to bear children, rather than requiring women to become men in order to compete.
- The original feminists did not support abortion. “Abortion is the ultimate exploitation of women.” - Alice Paul
- “Women will only have true equality when men share with them the responsibility of bringing up the next generation.” – Ruth Bader Ginsberg
- Abortion decision falls squarely on women – giving men a pass.

Misconception #6: Abortion is a simple solution.

Misconception:

- Feeling of distress when a woman finds she is pregnant. It is the simple solution to become unpregnant.

Response:

- There is no simple solution. Abortion regret is true effect. Post abortion trauma.
- For a woman to consider abortion as her best options she must reject any intuitive sense that she is already a mother to her child. This denial, whether conscious or unconscious, is the beginning of a powerful conflict between the natural love of a parent to her developing child and a pressing need to repress this truth of the human heart, burying any painful feelings and memories of the abortion. The enduring consequences of this internal conflict contribute to common symptoms experienced after abortion, such as depression, anxiety, addiction, and sleep disturbance.” Keven Burke and Janet Morana, Cofounders of Rachel’s Vineyard and Silent No More.

Misconception #7: Abortion is a religious issue.

Misconception:

- This is a religious issue, and we should not be forcing religion on someone else.

Response:

- Abortion is a human rights issue. If abortion is a religious issue, then so is racial injustice, immigration reform, environmental protection, poverty, and other social issues since they all have been brought up by religious leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr.
- Fundamental claim of basic human right is indicated in our constitutions.

Challenge #1: What about back-alley abortions?

Challenge: If we legalize abortion, won't we have an increase of back-alley abortions and put women at higher risk and harm?

Response #1:

- “We [NARAL’s founders] spoke of 5,000 to 10,000 deaths a year [from illegal abortions]. I confess that I knew the figures were totally false. It was a useful figure, widely accepted, so why go out of our way to correct it with honest statistics.” – Dr. Bernard Nathanson, co-founder of NARAL

Response #2:

- Abortion-related mortality declined due to the discovery of penicillin and to improvements in medical technologies, not due to legalization.
- Maternal deaths attributed to abortion in the US (source: CDC): In 1942 (prior to penicillin), 1,232 deaths. Once penicillin was discovered, the death rates declined rapidly (1947: 583; 1957: 260; 1968: 130; 1973: 57). Once Roe was established, deaths did not decline much further – roughly average 30 deaths per year.
- Even if you compare US to Europe, it was found that US had a lower death rate even when abortion was still illegal. Sweden (legal): 1946-1948 (250 deaths/100,000) Denmark (legal) 1940-1950 (195 deaths/100,000) U.S. (illegal) 1940-1950 (165 deaths/100,000)
- Even with legalized abortions, we currently have less restrictions/regulations than vet clinics. 227 abortion providers in 32 states cited for more than 1400 health and safety deficiencies between 2008-2016.

Response #3:

- Legalized abortion does not lower overall maternal mortality
 - Chile Study (2012): Maternal mortality rate when abortion was legal (1959-1989): 41.3 deaths/100,000 live births. After abortion was outlawed (1982-2007): 12.7 deaths per 100,000 live births.
 - Ireland (pre-legalization of abortion) vs. England/Scotland (legalized abortion in 1968)
 - Ireland maternal mortality rate (1968-2011): 1-2/100,000
 - England/Scotland maternal mortality rate (1968-2011): 10-12/100,000

Challenge #2: What about fetal deformity or illness?

Challenge: Full of needless suffering

Response:

- Sick children still have a right to life.
 - If it is not okay to kill sick, disabled or terminally ill children after birth, why is it okay to kill them before birth?
 - Pre-natal diagnoses are not always correct.
 - There is a growing resource of peri-natal hospice ensuring the child’s comfort and providing support for parents. Allow proper mourning and closure.

Challenge #3: What about rape?

Challenge: How can we force a woman to carry a baby to term that was conceived by rape?

Response:

- Abortion itself is psychologically traumatic for many women and is associated with many long-term mental health problems.
- Adding trauma on top of trauma and pain.
- Children conceived by rape still have a right to life.

Challenge #4: What about when the mother life is at risk?

Response:

- This is not truly abortion because it does not involve the intentional killing of the unborn child.
- Procedures necessary to save the mother's life are morally acceptable even if the unborn child may die as a side effect. For example, ectopic pregnancy, pregnant woman with uterine cancer.

The speaker than discussed three main counter challenges where people may think certain types of abortions should be illegal.

Counter Challenge #1: We shouldn't allow abortion for convenience

Counter Challenge #2: We shouldn't allow sex-selected abortions

Response: Abortion kills a human being; why is it wrong for one aspect but not another?

Counter Challenge #3: There is no link between abortion and Eugenics

- The Planned Parenthood founder, Margaret Sanger once said, "we want to exterminate the Negro population." She sought "the gradual suppression, elimination and eventual extinction, of defective stocks – those human weeds which threaten the blooming of the finest flowers of American civilization."
- Planned Parenthood claims they are not doing what Margaret set out to do. Yet:
 - Abortion rates for black women are 5x higher than white women
 - Almost half of all African American pregnancies end in Abortion (CDC)
 - 90% of Planned Parenthood clinics are in or near minority communities