Session #1: Making a Case for Life on Hostile Turf

The three most important words for the pro-life apologist:

1. Syllogism

2. Syllogism

3. Syllogism

Define your terms or get clobbered! Critics will take you off-message! They'll talk about choice, privacy, trusting women, and personal freedom, all of which are entirely beside the point. If you don't frame the debate, you lose.

Pro-life syllogism:

P1: It is wrong to intentionally kill an innocent human being.

P2: Abortion intentionally kills an innocent human being.

C: Therefore, abortion is wrong.

Avoid distractions! Stay focused on your syllogism to avoid distractions. There is no such thing as a "woman's perspective" on abortion that trumps all rational inquiries into the subject. Indeed, feminists, let alone women in general, have no single perspective on the issue. Gender is irrelevant. It is arguments that must be advanced and defended.

Thesis: You can make a persuasive case for life if you focus on three key questions:

#1: What is the unborn?

At the street level, many justifications for abortion assume the unborn are not human. Trot out your toddler to clarify things.

Ask if any of the reasons given for elective abortion justify killing a toddler. If not, the argument assumes the unborn are not human. Notice you are not yet making a case for the humanity of the unborn. (You'll do that later.) Rather, you are simply clarifying the issue.

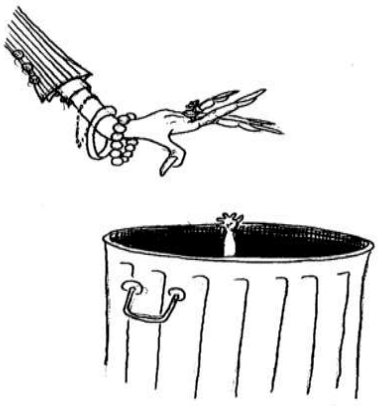
- *Anti-choicers don't trust women*—If parents want to rough up their toddler in the privacy of the bedroom, should we trust them to make their own personal choices?
- *Anti-choicers want to force poor women* to bring another child into this world.—When human beings get expensive, may we kill them?
- *Abortion is needed to prevent child abuse*.—Can we kill 2-year olds to prevent the abuse of 5-year olds?
- *Abortion allows women freedom to pursue careers*.—Can we kill toddlers who interfere with a mother's education or career?
- *Laws against abortion impose morality*.—Would you say the same thing about laws against killing toddlers?
- *Abortion is needed to prevent disabled children*.—Since when are damaged humans non-humans? Is it okay to kill handicapped two-year olds?

Scientific support: The unborn are distinct, living, and whole human beings. True, they have yet to grow and mature, but they are whole human beings nonetheless.
Leading embryology textbooks affirm this.[1]

- *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* Keith L. Moore & T.V.N. Persaud write: "A zygote is the beginning of a new human being. Human development begins at fertilization, the process during which a male gamete or sperm...unites with a female gamete or oocyte...to form a single cell called a zygote. This highly specialized, totipotent cell marks the beginning of each of us as a unique individual."

- T.W. Sadler's *Langman's Embryology* states: "The development of a human begins with fertilization, a process by which the spermatozoon from the male and the oocyte from the female unite to give rise to a new organism, the zygote."

- Embryologists Ronan O'Rahilly and Fabiola Müller write, "Although life is a continuous process, fertilization is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is thereby formed."



That abortion intentionally kills a living human being is conceded by many who support the practice:

- **Dr. Warren Hern**, author of *Abortion Practice*—to a Planned Parenthood conference: "We have reached a point in this particular technology [D&E abortion] where there is no possibility of denying an act of destruction. It is before one's eyes. The sensations of dismemberment flow through the forceps like an electric current."[2]

[1] See T.W. Sadler, *Langman's Embryology,* 5th ed. (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1993) p. 3; Keith L. Moore, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company, 1998),pp. 2-18. O'Rahilly, Ronand and Muller, Pabiola, *Human Embryology and Teratology,* 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley-Liss, 1996) pp. 8, 29.
[2] Paper presented at the 1978 meeting of the Association of Planned Parenthood Physicians, October 26. http://www.drhern.com/pdfs/staffrx.pdf

- **Ronald Dworkin**, in *Life's Dominion*—Abortion deliberately kills a developing embryo and is a choice for death.[3]

- **Faye Wattleton**, former President of Planned Parenthood—"I think we have deluded ourselves into believing that people don't know that abortion is killing. So any pretense that abortion is not killing is a signal of our ambivalence, a signal that we cannot say yes, it kills a fetus."[4]

- **Naomi Wolf**, a prominent feminist author and abortion supporter, in *The New Republic*—"Clinging to a rhetoric about abortion in which there is no life and no death, we entangle our beliefs in a series of self-delusions, fibs and evasions. And we risk becoming precisely what our critics charge us with being: callous, selfish and casually destructive men and women who share a cheapened view of human life...we need to contextualize the fight to defend abortion rights within a moral framework that admits that the death of a fetus is a real death."[5]

- **Camille Paglia,** feminist**—**"Hence I have always frankly admitted that abortion is murder, the extermination of the powerless by the powerful. Liberals for the most part have shrunk from facing the ethical consequences of their embrace of abortion, which results in the annihilation of concrete individuals and not just clumps of insensate tissue."[6]

- **Anthony Kennedy,** Supreme Court Justice—"The fetus, in many cases, dies just as a human adult or child would: it bleeds to death as it is torn from limb to limb….The fetus can be alive at the beginning of the dismemberment process and can survive for a time while its limbs are being torn off.…Dr. [Leroy] Carhart [the abortionist who challenged Nebraska's partial"birth ban] has observed fetal heartbeat . . . with "extensive parts of the fetus removed,"…and testified that mere dismemberment of a limb does not always cause death because he knows of a physician who removed the arm of a fetus only to have the fetus go on to be born "as a living child with one arm." At the conclusion of a D&E abortion…the abortionist is left with "a tray full of pieces."[7]

#2: What makes humans valuable?

Key philosophical question: Does each human being have an equal right to life or do only some have it in virtue of some characteristic which may come and go within the course of their lifetimes? Pro-life advocates contend there is no morally significant difference between the embryo you once were and the adult you are today that would justify killing you at that earlier stage of development. Differences of size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency are not good reasons for saying you had no right to life then but you do now.

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[3] Ronald Dworkin, *Life's Dominion: An Argument About Abortion, Euthanasia, and Individual Freedom* (New York: Vintage, 1994) p. 3.
[4] Faye Wattleton, "Speaking Frankly," *Ms*., May / June 1997, Volume VII, Number 6, 67.
[5] Naomi Wolf, "Our Bodies, Our Souls," *The New Republic*, October 16, 1995, 26
[6] Camille Paglia, "Fresh Blood for the Vampire," *Salon*, September 10, 2008.
[7] *Stenberg v. Carhart*, 2000.

Stephen Schwarz suggests the acronym **SLED** as a helpful reminder of these non-essential differences:

> Size: You were smaller as an embryo, but since when does your body size determine value?
> Level of Development: True, you were less developed as an embryo, but six-month olds are less developed than teenagers physically and mentally, but we don't think we can kill them.
> Environment: Where you are has no bearing on what you are. How does a journey of eight inches down the birth canal change the essential nature of the unborn from a being we can kill to one we can't?
> Degree of Dependency: Sure, you depended on your mother for survival, but since when does dependence on another human mean we can kill you? (Consider conjoined twins, for example.)

In short, humans are equal by nature not function. Although they differ immensely in their respective degrees of development, they are nonetheless equal because they share a common human nature.

#3: What's the point?

The point is to love our unborn neighbor even though it's costly. We start by succinctly defending him:

1-Minute Soundbite: "I am pro-life because the science of embryology establishes that from the earliest stages of development, you were a distinct, living, and whole human being. You weren't part of another human being like skin cells on the back of my hand; you were already a whole living member of the human family even though you had yet to mature. And there is no essential difference between the embryo you once were and the adult you are today that justifies killing you at that earlier stage of development. Differences of size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency are not good reasons for saying you could be killed then but not now."

Get Smart! Up Your Pro-Life Game in Three Easy Steps:

- **Step #1**—***Pray!*** Colson Center's "21 Days for Life" prayer and apologetics guide w/ short readings http://www.colsoncenter.org/?s=21+days+for+life
- **Step #2**—***Watch!*** Debate between Scott Klusendorf and Nadine Strossen (former President of the ACLU) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmVYD1Nn0_o

Suggested Reading:

1. Peter Kreeft, *The Unaborted Socrates: A Dramatic Debate on the Issues Surrounding Abortion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983)
2. Scott Klusendorf, *The Case for Life: Equipping Christians to Engage the Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009)
3. Christopher Kaczor, *The Ethics of Abortion: Women's Rights, Human Life, and the Question of Justice,* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015)