

# THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

**Psalm 139:13-16**  
**Lesson #28**  
**Abortion**  
**02/14/2021**

“Love and sacrifice are closely linked, like the sun and the light. We cannot love without suffering and we cannot suffer without love.”



*Didn't Jesus  
show us that?*

St. Gianna Molla

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## Abortion

- Have liberal abortion laws led to a dramatic escalation of abortions in America?
- Is Roe v. Wade a political hill that evangelicals should be willing to die on?
- Should abortion be illegal in America?
- Is it hypocritical for a devout pro-birth Christian to vote democratic, knowing that its platform takes a pro choice position?

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### NOTE:

This class is an appendix to our study of 1 Peter.

**1 Peter reminds us that we:**

- are part of a kingdom that is **not of this world**.
- are to be salt and light via the **Way of the Cross**.
- submit to human institutions as **peacemakers**.

**Application appendix:**

1. **Submitting to Caesar** when he is evil.
2. **Managing fear** in the face of suffering.
3. **Christian nationalism** - “American Caesar”.
4. **Socialism** - the general welfare.
5. **Abortion** - a test of values.

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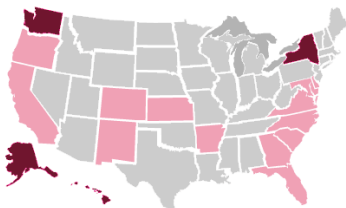
### Fact #1

**Roe v. Wade (1973)**

**was a landmark political game changer.**

- Under English common law, the cornerstone of American jurisprudence, abortions performed prior to “quickening” (4th month) were **legal**.
- By 1900 nearly all states had made abortions **illegal** because they were deemed **unsafe for the mother**.
- By the 1960’s abortions were legal under restricted circumstances in 16 states.

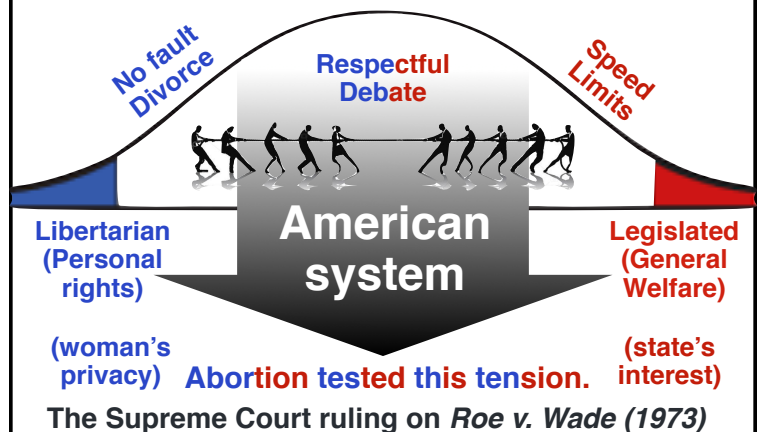
**A call for a national standard led to the Roe v. Wade decision.**



■ States that had no restrictions on abortion  
■ States that limited abortion to health of mother & physician

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**Tension is built into the American system.**



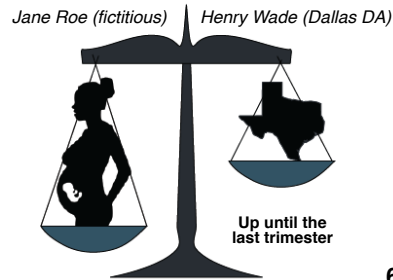
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## The Supreme Court ruling on *Roe v. Wade* (1973) Liberty (privacy) vs. General Welfare (regulation)

In the early stages of pregnancy, a fetus cannot survive outside of the womb.

### The Court said:

During this time, the mother's liberty interest (choice to have an abortion if desired) outweighs the state's interest in prenatal life.



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At some point, the fetus can survive outside of the womb ("point of viability").

From the point of viability, the Court grants the state a stronger interest.

Jane Roe (fictitious) Henry Wade (Dallas DA)



### The Court said:

From the point of viability, the state's interest in prenatal life outweighs the mother's liberty interest (choice in abortion).

### Court Ruling

Before the point of viability, the state cannot ban abortions based on the concern for prenatal life. After the point of viability, it can.

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### Fact #2

## Abortion became a hot button politically for white evangelicals after 1978.

"The Southern Baptist Convention passed resolutions in 1971, 1974 and 1976 - after *Roe v. Wade* - affirming the idea that women should have access to abortion for a variety of reasons and that the government should play a limited role in that matter."

"After 1978 Paul Weyrich, founder of the *Heritage Foundation* used the abortion issue to unite white evangelicals to the political right."



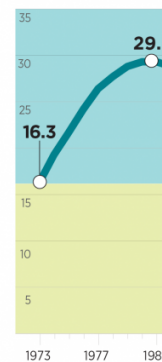
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### Fact #3

## After *Roe v Wade*, abortions skyrocketed.

No. of abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44

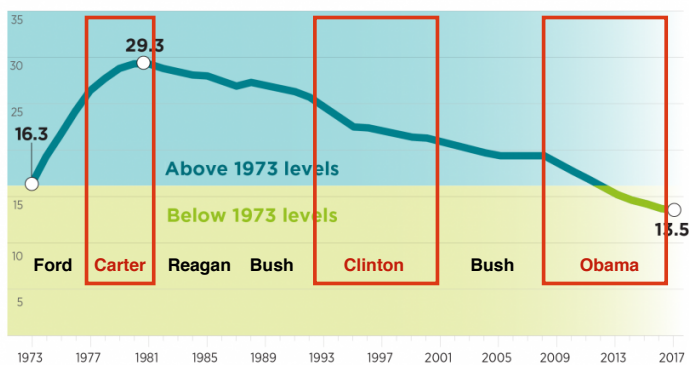


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### Fact #3

## The U.S. abortion rate reached a historic low in 2017

No. of abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44



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## Prenatal development, viability, and abortions



|               |    |               |    |
|---------------|----|---------------|----|
| 1             | 13 | 24            | 28 |
| 1st trimester |    |               |    |
| 2nd trimester |    | 3rd trimester |    |

66% 25% 8% 1% of abortions

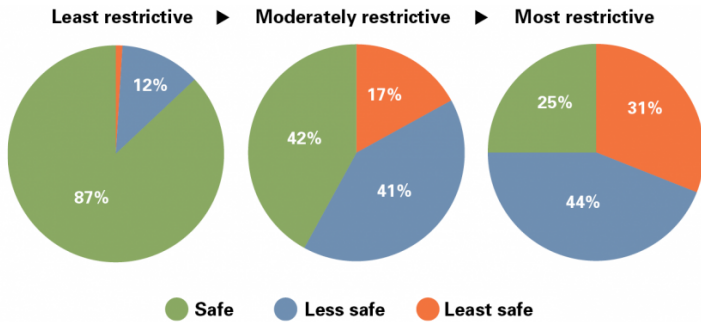
### Facts #4

Most abortions take place early in the first trimester.

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Fact #4

**Legal restrictions decrease mothers' safety in having an abortion.**

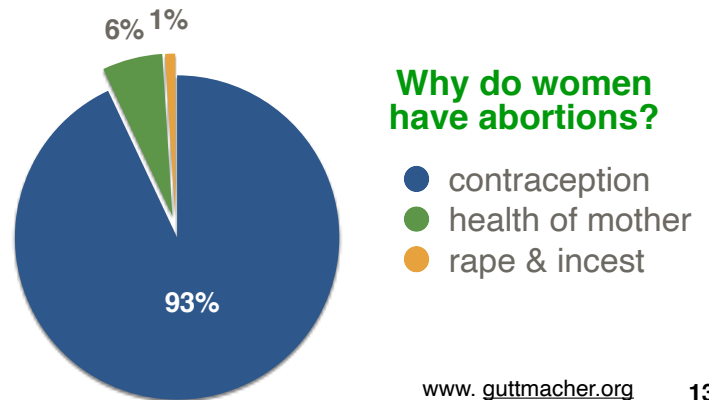


www.guttmacher.org

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Fact #5

**Most abortions are *not* related to the mother's physical health, rape, or incest.**



www.guttmacher.org

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Fact #6

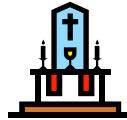
**Public policy**

**is not the same as**

**Christian doctrine**



- Does it serve the general welfare?
- Does it tie the state to one religious sect?
- Does it properly respect human freedom?

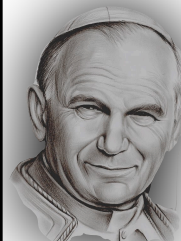


- Does it reflect orthodox faith and practice?
- Does it reflect Kingdom values?
- Does it reflect Biblical teaching.

- **Does it reflect common law?**
- **Is the fetus a person with civil rights?**

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“A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members; and among the most vulnerable are surely the unborn and the dying.”



St. John Paul II

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**Arguments for Pro-Choice**

- **Science is not equipped to make a decision as to when “personhood” begins.**

Some people make a distinction between “**biological life**” and “**biographical life**” (the sum of one’s aspirations, decisions, activities, projects, and human relationships).

- **Twinning** occurs between the 10th and 14th day after fertilization.
- **Sharing the same DNA** does not make a fetus a person any more than it makes an acorn an oak tree.
- **Scripture is unclear with respect to the onset of personhood and abortion.** *Pre-birth references are not meant to be descriptive of human biology. Abortion is not mentioned in the N.T. although it was quite common.*

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- **Many leading religious authorities do not regard the fetus as a person.**

Conservative Judaism  
Reformed Judaism  
Most mainline Protestant denominations.

- **Abortion is not singled out as a moral issue in the Bible although widely practiced at the time.**
- **Common sense suggests that the fetus is not a full person.**
  - ✓ Our age is marked by our “birthday” not “conception.”
  - ✓ A mother is not considered a mother until after the birth.
  - ✓ Nearly 50% of pregnancies are spontaneously miscarried yet there are few memorial services.
  - ✓ Common genetics and identity are not linked in nature.

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## Abortion is a response to a problem - an unwanted pregnancy.

### Addressing the real problem (the unwanted pregnancy)

- Support vulnerable pregnant women with material, social, and spiritual **aid in making wise decisions**.
- Provide **support for mothers** who chose to give birth to their children in hard circumstances.
- Provide examples, encouragement, and economics that **build sound family values**.

The solution should address the real problem not just bad solutions.

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## Arguments for Pro-Birth

- **Reason:** When in doubt don't kill what could be a human person.
- **Implications:** The social implications of a liberal abortion policy may be uncomfortable to live with.
- **Tradition** has been consistently pro-birth until the modern era.
- **Common law:** Public policy and law in a secular state should reflect the common good and the sanctity of life and need not defer to special revelation (the Bible).
- **Scripture:** should be used responsibly.

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## Abortion was specifically forbidden in some early Christian documents (but not in Scripture).

"You shall not **slay the child by abortions (phthora)**. You shall not kill what is generated."

*Didache 2:2 (late 1st century)*

"You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not **slay the child by abortions**. You shall not kill what is generated." *Barnabas 19.5*.

- St. Augustine canonized anti abortion as law in the 4th cent.
- Abortion was generally forbidden throughout much of church history (**with debate about the exceptions in application**).

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### Psalm 139:13-16

"For **Thou didst form my inward parts**; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee, when **I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth**. Thine eyes have seen my **unformed substance**; and in Thy book **they were all written, the days that were ordained for me**, when as yet there was not one of them."

- **Figurative, poetic, hyperbolic language is generally not read as a scientific description of physical objects.** (*forever, eye for an eye, hand and eye of God, streets of gold, etc.*)

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### Exodus 21

"22 If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that a **miscarriage** results, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide. 23 But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life,"



- Does "**miscarriage**" = "Give birth prematurely"?
- Does a **different penalties** for the death of the mother and miscarried child suggest that a fetus is not valued like the mother?

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## Public policy



- When should public policy and law in a secular state reflect Christian doctrine? **When it reflects the common sense of the people or natural law.**
- Is it possible and reasonable to be pro-life personally and pro-choice politically? **YES, in the same way it was possible for Jesus' disciples to pay taxes to Caesar.**
- Do Christians fail to respect American Caesar when:
  1. They try to impose special revelation on the state.
  2. They fail to apply general revelation to the state.

**YES**

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## Advice to *pro-BIRTH* militants

*pro-LIFE* suggests positions that many evangelicals don't support.

- Anti death penalty
- Welcoming more immigrants
- Expanded healthcare
- Financial aid to unemployed and poor
- etc.

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## Advice to *pro-birth* militants

- Support the **sanctity of all human life** (not just the unborn).
- This issue should not be a **political hill to die on**.
- Give thoughtful attention to the **original problem**.
- Respect the possibility of **logical differing opinions**.
- Avoid **Ad Hominem** attacks on those who disagree.
- For public policy use **common sense** arguments.
- Don't outdistance **popular support** for your point.
- Avoid **emotionally manipulative** arguments.
- Overturning Roe v Wade **may not affect the number of abortions but increase high risk abortions**.

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## Advice to *pro-choice* militants

- Don't dodge the central point of "**personhood**".
- Avoid **smoke screens** - woman's rights, ch./state.
- Face the **consequences** of a pro-choice culture.
- Avoid **emotionally manipulative** arguments.
- Avoid **Ad Hominem** attacks on those who disagree.
- Address the widespread **abuse** of pro-choice law.
- Don't marginalize the **emotional trauma** of abortion.
- Respect the possibility of **valid differing views**.

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## Conclusions

- **Biblical texts on this subject** may not be as clear as each side of the debate would like. *2 Tim.2:15*
- When in doubt **on matters of life or death**, it is wise to be conservative. *Matt.23:23-26*
- People on both sides of the debate should **stick to the whole truth and the core issue**.
- **In a pluralistic society** be prepared to tolerate public policies that would not be acceptable in the Faith Community. *1 Cor.5:9-10*
- **In a broken world** sometimes we must choose between the lesser of two evils. *Matt.19:8*
- **The core values** of a culture will be reflected in either decision. *Matt.7:15-20*

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**Pro Choice**  
*should address the abortion issue before and after impregnation.*

**Pro Birth**  
*should address the abortion issue before and after giving birth.*

### Resources:

In Chapel Hill  
Pregnancy Support Services  
919-490-0203  
In Durham  
Gateway  
919-251-9444

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## Three positions

- Abortion-on-demand for any reason. (pro-choice)
- Abortion is permitted only when the physical life of the mother is at risk. (pro-birth)

- Abortion permitted in restricted circumstances.
  - Abortion is a very serious issue.
  - Abortion is not necessarily murder.
  - Abortion may be justified (by the state) in some cases.
  - Abortion should not be justified in the following cases.
    - after viability (with very few exceptions)
    - as a means of birth control (after the fact)
    - for population control
    - for anticipated deformities

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In a pluralistic America

“Abortion should  
be RARE,  
safe, and  
legal.”



Bill Clinton

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“If we accept that a mother can kill  
even her own child, how can we tell  
other people to not kill each other?  
Any country that accepts abortion is  
not teaching its people to love, but to  
use any violence to get  
what they want.”



*Mother Teresa*

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