Is There a Biblical Basis for Being Pro-Choice?

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Over at BeliefNet, an unnamed author has attempted to make a biblical case for the pro-choice view on abortion. The author calls the issue “morally complex” and points to the diversity of religious views on abortion as reasons the question is not settled.

He (or she) could have pointed out that the religious bodies which take a pro-choice position are less likely to read the Bible as God’s inerrant, inspired, authoritative, and sufficient word than those who take the pro-life view. It could also have been said that proponents of choice are less likely to employ a grammatical-historical hermeneutic of interpretation than those of us who systematically trace the sanctity of human life throughout the Bible.

The author makes the usual argument that no one in a pluralistic society should impose religious views on everyone else through the passage of laws. What is meant is that no laws should restrict abortion, because the pro-choice side most certainly advocates laws that maximize leniency on abortion despite the offense such laws inflict on pro-life people.

The Bible-never-mentions-abortion canard is trotted out without acknowledging any of the many passages the pro-life people use to support our view. For instance, while pointing to the Exodus 21 passage about premature birth resulting from the violence of fighting men the author fails to address any of the pro-life responses that have been made.

Additionally, confusion is sown over the beginning of life, equating it with the start of pregnancy. These are not two different things. Yes, life can begin in a petri dish while pregnancy for IVF users begins at implantation, but one wishes the author could at least be as honest as other abortion advocates and some abortionists.

As do most pro-choice advocates, the author never deals with what exactly is being aborted. Whenever one of them says as here, that “all life is sacred” it reveals less a concern about the sanctity of human life and more about its quality and other utilitarian concerns.

Just in case he or she is wrong about abortion, a rather glib blanket of forgiveness is offered: “If we make wrong choices, God forgives us.” The phenomena of deep regret and grief that many women experience after abortions is dismissed as resulting from the pro-life movement’s insistence that “abortion is murder.” The author ignores that post-abortion trauma also exists in cultures where that notion is a foreign.
The author does briefly address six biblical principles [in bold] that are worthy of discussion. My equally brief comments on each will be in italic.

1. **Stewardship.** The author says, "[A]s moral agents, women have the God-given obligation to make decisions about the course of action that seems most responsible in cases of unwelcome pregnancy."

The problem with this explanation of stewardship is that, in the passage referenced (Genesis 1:27-28), God limited human stewardship to the realms of fish, birds, and animals. He never gave human beings carte blanche dominion or rule over other people.

2. **Free will.** About this point, the author says, "Created in God’s image, we are endowed with the ability to make moral choices. This ability is the very basis of an individual’s dignity and autonomy."

While we would argue that it is imago Dei itself that grants us dignity, the ability to make choices is a facet of our likeness to God. The author sidesteps the fact much of the Bible is devoted to showing us how bad our choices can be! Those that are not in keeping with the nature and character of God are abominable to Him—in particular the shedding of innocent blood and most notably child-sacrifice (Proverbs 6:16-19, Jeremiah 32:35). Furthermore, we’re taught that choices have consequences—some are rewarded while others earn God’s wrath. Not all choices, therefore, are equal or ennobling. Sinful choices are never dignified.

3. **Personhood.** "The Bible’s portrait of personhood centers on the woman and man who bear the image of God and live in responsible relation to God."

The Bible also recognizes the personalities of people yet unborn. In just one of many examples, Genesis 25:21-26 describes the conception, gestation, and birth of Jacob and Esau. During Rebekah’s pregnancy, God described the nature of each unborn twin. He knew them and had specific plans for them. About this same pregnancy, Hosea 12:2-4 reveals that Jacob had the same personality in the womb as when an adult. It sounds as though God judged him for something he did while in the womb! This example contradicts the author’s statement asserting the Bible “says nothing about the process of conception, pregnancy, and birth.”

4. **The sanctity of life.** "...It is because we believe in the sanctity of all human life that we are sensitive to the effects of an unwanted pregnancy on women and families. We believe a child has the right to enter the world wanted and loved... are sensitive to the effects of an unwanted pregnancy upon individual women, upon their loved ones and their families, and we recognize that they, not we, must determine what is best for those directly concerned and involved."

The author turns the sanctity of human life against the most vulnerable humans! We should have sympathy for people in difficult circumstances, but what’s missing here is sympathy for the unborn and their even more basic right to life. Each child conceived is a creation of God, and is loved and wanted by Him. We must encourage people to make choices that will not harm other human beings and alienate them from God.

5. **Respect.** "The Bible places full responsibility for procreation in the hands of parents. Requiring a woman to complete a pregnancy against her will devalues motherhood and shows lack of respect for women."

As shown in the earlier example, procreation involves God, so therefore the responsibility for life is not solely in human hands. If, as the Bible teaches (1 Samuel 2:6 and many other passages),..."
He sovereignly grants life, then we must honor Him with our trust that He knows best. It is abortion that devalues motherhood, not laws against it. It cannot be dignified or ennobling to kill the innocent. Failing to help pregnant women carry their children to term is, on the other hand, something that shows them a lack of respect.

6. Religious Liberty. “Religious Americans honor the dignity and value of all human life but recognize that different religious traditions hold a variety of views regarding when life begins and when ensoulment occurs. In this nation all are free to live according to their consciences and religious beliefs. No one religious philosophy should govern the law for all Americans.”

   Human life has dignity and value. Period. Philosophical views that impinge on the right to life of entire classes of people—such as the unborn, racial or ethnic minorities, disabled people, etc.—must be repudiated. Science is settled on the matter of when human life begins—at conception—and has finally caught up to what is depicted in the Bible.iii Furthermore, the ensoulment issue is no longer a matter of religious debate. The defining characteristic of human beings is our image-bearer status, which is intrinsic from conception and not developed or acquired.

Any discussion of freedom from a biblical point of view should reference passages such as John 8:32-36, and Galatians 5:1 and 13. God desiresthat we all be set free from the power of sin in Christ. “Freedom of choice” is properly exercised in glorifying God rather than indulging self. The author missed an opportunity to exhort readers to the highest calling—that of sacrificing personal freedom for service.


