

Life Matters WORLDWIDE

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What about Abortion for Rape or Incest?

RAPE. INCEST. These disgusting, violent acts shock and dismay us. We call the attackers “sick” and “brutal” and attempt to rehabilitate them. We keep the victims from public display. And should a pregnancy occur, we destroy the evidence. Abortion actually excuses the deviant, ignores the victim, and murders the innocent. Can we accept it?

Because rape and incest are such sensitive topics, abortion proponents have used them to open and widen the door to abortion-on-demand. Using the weighted question, “Should a woman be forced to carry the child of a man who has so violated her?” abortion advocates have gained the sympathy of the public. Approximately three of four people would allow abortion in such situations.¹

The infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision illustrates this fully. “Jane Roe” claimed to have been the victim of a rape, became pregnant, and appealed to the Supreme Court for the right to abort her child. She later admitted to fabricating the story, and by the time that decision was handed down, she had already given birth and placed her child for adoption. Since that 1973 case, however, as many as 1.5 million abortions have been performed in a year. What began as sympathy for a victimized woman resulted in the deaths of millions of unborn babies.

What do the numbers tell us?

But how many of these abortions are actually “hard cases?” In two studies of abortion clients (1987 and 2004), “1% indicated that they had been victims of rape, and less than half a percent said they became pregnant as a result of incest.”² Clearly, the cry for abortion to “free” these victims is disproportionately loud.



Statistics, however, are not our main concern. Though few pregnancies do result from both rape and incest, we must ask the question, “What is the compassionate response to these hurting few?”

The psychological turmoil

Much more than being physically violated, the victim of rape has been psychologically traumatized. Though research indicates that rape is an act of violence aimed toward control of a vulnerable victim, many people continue to believe, perhaps unconsciously, that the victim is partly to blame - she in some way “attracted” her attacker sexually. Thus the victim feels an irrational guilt or self-blame which is often strengthened by the reactions of family, friends, and society.

Relations and friends, not wanting to discuss a painful subject, may harbor their own feelings of embarrassment. The victim is made to believe that she ought to conceal the fact of her rape at all costs. She feels confused and ashamed, "dirty" and "ruined."

When a pregnancy results, these psychological workings are more traumatic and devastating. Society's abhorrence of rape and rejection of the victim are transferred to the criminal's offspring. Far from being viewed as an innocent victim himself, the child is seen as evidence to be destroyed. Abortions are "beneficial" to society and, presumably to the victim.

Yet, abortion, far from curing the victim's problems, only increases her feelings of guilt, self-blame and incompetence.

"Indeed, the emotions surrounding rape and abortions are so nearly identical that abortion is almost certain to reinforce negative attitudes. Like rape, abortion accentuates feelings of guilt, lowered self-esteem, feelings of being sexually violated, feelings of having lost control or of being controlled by circumstances, suspicion of males, sexual coldness, and so on. Abortion of pregnant rape victims, then, tends only to reinforce these negative feelings and does nothing to promote the inner reconciliation which is so desperately needed. Encouraging a woman to vent her displaced anger in 'revenge' against her unborn child only impacts negative and self-destructive attitudes into her psyche."³

Rather than offering abortion as the bandage to cover and heal the devastating after-effects of a rape, we must give these women what they really need - a listening ear, an accepting hug, tears of sympathy, and encouraging words. In these ways -- and others -- we can help them move from negative attitudes to positive, healing ones. We can help them see that those who choose to give life to the other innocent victim of rape are breaking the chain of destructive manipulation and taking the step toward healing. We must examine our personal responses not only in the light of this evidence (though it is valid), but in the light of God's word as well. What does God say about rape, incest, and the unborn child?

Sin and the sanctity of human life

In Leviticus 18, God clearly states his hatred of incest. He points out that incestuous relationships typified the degradation of the societies God was driving out before the Israelites and actually defiled the very land they lived in. Israelites who practiced incest were to be cut off from their people. The Apostle Paul in his letter to a New Testament church (1 Corinthians 5) presents a parallel idea. The brother involved in an incestuous affair was to be handed over to Satan -- cut off from the church until he truly repented.



According to the same Mosaic law, the raping of a married or engaged woman was punishable by death. (God does not, however condemn the woman who is truly innocent - the one who cries out to no avail, Deuteronomy 22:23-27.) If an unmarried woman was raped, the man was to marry her and provide for her as long as he lived (Deut. 22:28-29).

Clearly, God detests rape and incest, as well as any other form of sexual immorality. Yet nowhere does He condemn the offspring of sexual immorality.⁴ Rather, they are the recipients of blessing. Moab and Ben-ammi, the sons of Lot and his daughters, grew into mighty nations. Perez, the son of Judah and his daughter-in-law, stands in the blessing on Ruth and in the genealogy of Christ. In fact, God

stresses the principle that “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin” (Deut. 24:16).

To God, human life is sacred. “No human being is conceived outside His will. Even through circumstances that are sinful -- fornication, adultery, or violence -- He can cause something as precious and redeemable as a new human being to come forth. When life comes, it comes as a gift, never as punishment (Psalm 127:3).”⁵

Pregnancy, though seemingly an added difficulty, is in truth a reminder of God's ability to form good from evil, to bring forth life from love's grave. In his book, *The Least of These*, Curt Young describes pregnancy as an avenue of hope:

“When I see a pregnant woman, regardless of her circumstances, the first thing I recognize is hope, because God is at work with her. I want to help her see that. The baby is not a 'mistake,' even if her conduct [or the conduct of someone else] was. The Lord of Life has gained her attention and now compels her to think of things she may have feared or ignored throughout her life -- the existence of God, the meaning of life, the nature of love, accountability before God. He is giving her an opportunity to know Him, to love Him, and to carry out the lofty privilege of bringing a new human being into the world.”⁵

Rape and incest are horrifying crimes. They need to be exposed and dealt with forcefully. Abortion is neither a deterrent nor a cure. It perpetuates the devaluation of the vulnerable and of all life. It perpetuates deception and violence. If we speak of justice, abortion is the greater injustice. If we speak of compassion, we must speak for life.

Endnotes

1. [Gallup poll on abortion](#), tracking U.S. attitudes toward abortion from 1975 to the present.
2. Torres and Forrest, “Why Do Women Have Abortions?” *Family Planning Perspectives*, July/August 1988, 20:4, pp. 169-176. [“Reasons U.S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives,”](#) *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2005, 37(3):110–118.
3. David C. Reardon, *Aborted Women: Silent No More*, (Crossway Books, 1987), p. 198.
4. It must be noted that in the case of David and Bathsheba, God did take the life of the child, as is His prerogative. The child's death punished the parents and does not suggest God's condemnation of a “tainted” child. In God's mercy, the couple's second son (Solomon) became Israel's next king.
5. Curt Young, *The Least of These*, (Moody Press, 1983), p. 43.