



LIFE VS CHOICE

CRAIG REES • 23 OCTOBER 2022

Big Idea: The Christian's objective should be for abortion to be unthinkable, not impossible.

Key Scriptures: Exodus 22:11; Psalms 139; Romans 8:1-14

1. Pastor Craig said abortion is a gospel and a justice issue. How would you explain this in your own words?
2. The church's message about abortion has been clear and consistent for two thousand years. How does the consistency of the message impact you personally? How should that consistency impact you? Is there a gap between the impact and what you think the impact should be? If so, why?
3. Pastor Craig addressed the inconsistency in how abortion has been categorized in the church's history. Think back to last week's message of church and state. An area of contention was the source of authority for discipline (church or state). This is where the categorization played out. Was abortion worthy of excommunication, or was it a grievous sin that required repentance to avoid damnation? This inconsistency is driven, in part, by the attempt to balance the seriousness of the sin with God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness that is readily available. The same tension is felt today. How do we best balance that tension so that people do not live with the destructive power of guilt and shame?
4. What is your takeaway from our brief foray into abortion in church history? How, if at all, should awareness of the church's historical approach to abortion impact the 'tone' a Christian should take when discussing abortion?
5. Pastor Craig talked about the theology of quickening and ensoulment (delayed ensoulment) and how this debate impacted where the church drew the lines on the severity of an abortion. The theological debate illustrates how exceptions force us to examine where we draw the lines.

This leads to the question of exceptions today (in the case of the death of a mother and rape). This is a contentious theme. How do we tackle the 'exceptions' issue maturely and wisely?

6. Proposition 3 is frequently portrayed as necessary because of the need for exceptions. An examination of the text would suggest that it encodes a value system that prioritizes autonomy (personal freedom) over justice in the Michigan constitution. More than that, it champions a restructuring of the framework of the family that has been the bedrock of American society. How would you answer someone who says that they are pro-prop 3?
7. For abortion to be unthinkable, a shift is needed from a pro-birth message to a pro-life ministry. Only when we make that shift do we truly embrace the reality that social and moral factors drive abortion. What is required to remove the social factors that drive many abortions?
8. Paul Ramsey in, *Who Speaks for the Church?* (1967) warned that churches that overdetermine the political engagement of their flock tyrannize consciences and prevent their church from fulfilling its calling with integrity before God. When it comes to abortion, how could the church tyrannize consciences? What would you consider to be the church's proper place?