



Why
We're

Pro
Life

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TRENT HORN



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Trent Horn

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Once, while I was giving a pro-life presentation, one of the audience members—a girl I'll call Kelsey—repeatedly gave me the “evil eye.” After my talk ended, I invited the attendees to ask questions, and Kelsey's hand shot up. But instead of asking a question, Kelsey made this triumphal statement:

“Look, I don't see what the big deal is. I don't like abortion, but I don't go around shoving my beliefs down other people's throats like you do.”

I appreciated that Kelsey at least thought it was important to stand up for what she believed. I also understood why she might have had a negative attitude toward people who oppose abortion. Perhaps she knew some people who called themselves “pro-life” but didn't seem to value all human life. Or people who harbored an uncaring, judgmental attitude toward women who've had abortions.

Kelsey might also have known that most women seek abortions because of social and economic reasons that are often very complicated. What would she say to a pregnant teenager fearful of telling her strict parents? Or the woman who is worried her boyfriend will leave her with no means of support?

It's circumstances like these that make me stop and ask myself, “Should abortion be legal?” And honestly, I would say “yes” . . . if the unborn weren't human beings.

If the unborn are *not* human beings, then abortion really isn't a big deal. We would never have to defend

getting an abortion, just as we never have to defend getting dental fillings or any other harmless activity. But, if the unborn *are* human beings, then no circumstances, however difficult, could justify it.

That means in order to answer the question, “Should abortion be legal?”—and to answer Kelsey’s objection—we need to answer a more fundamental question: “What are the unborn?”

What’s wrong with abortion?

The first thing I said in reply to Kelsey was a simple question: “Why don’t you like abortion?”

Everyone fell silent as Kelsey struggled to answer. She finally said, “Well, isn’t it obvious?”

“Pretend I’m five years old and I’ve never heard of abortion,” I said. “What is so bad about it?”

“It takes a life out of the world.”

“What kind of life?” I asked. “If I step on a spider, is that an abortion?”

“A human life,” she quietly replied.

I then put everything together. “Kelsey, is this your position? You don’t like abortion because it kills human lives, but you think it should be legal for people to kill those human lives? That doesn’t make a lot of sense to me. Did I understand you correctly?”

Kelsey’s face grew red. “Well, it sounds terrible when you put it *that way*.”

Now, did I *put it* that way, or is that just *the way abortion is*?

To see what I mean, imagine you're at the kitchen sink washing the dishes. Your five-year-old child runs up behind you and says, "Mommy [or Daddy], can I kill this?" What is the first question you will ask? It will probably be, "*What is it?*"

After all, if it's a cockroach, then it's time to get out a can of Raid. If it's a cat, well, some people who resent cats might waver on the answer, but most of us would say "no." But what if it's his two-year-old sister? Along with saying "no," you'd probably want to call a counselor!

We would give different answers because the right answer depends almost entirely on the *identity of the thing* being killed. Every honest person involved in the abortion debate admits that *something* is killed during an abortion. Here's how the U.S. Supreme Court described abortions done in the second trimester of pregnancy:

The doctor, often guided by ultrasound, inserts grasping forceps through the woman's cervix and into the uterus to grab the fetus. The doctor grips a fetal part with the forceps and pulls it back through the cervix and vagina, continuing to pull even after meeting resistance from the cervix. The friction causes the fetus to tear apart. For example, a leg might be ripped off the fetus as it is pulled through the cervix and out of the woman. The process of

evacuating the fetus piece by piece continues until it has been completely removed.¹

Even in the more common first-trimester abortions, a living fetus is killed, even if its arms and legs are smaller or not fully developed yet.

Are these things that get killed in abortion human beings? If they are, then most of the reasons that are given to justify abortion don't work. We know this because we would never substitute another kind of human being—a toddler, a teenager, an elderly person—for an unborn child in those same arguments. Some women feel they can't afford to take care of their toddlers, but we don't argue that they should have the right to kill them. Some teenagers are unwanted and end up in orphanages or foster care—does their being unwanted mean they can be killed? And the elderly can be a physical, financial, and emotional burden on their caregivers; this doesn't justify putting them to death.

Poverty, abuse, lack of love, unexpected roadblocks to our life's plans . . . these are all serious problems, but killing a human being is never the solution.

So, if the reasons given for abortion would not justify killing a born human, then they don't justify killing an unborn human—if embryos and fetuses are indeed fully as human as a toddler or teenager. But what if they're not? If they're actually just "clumps of cells," then maybe abortion isn't such a big deal after all?

When does life begin?

Deep down, we know that the unborn aren't just clumps of cells because we don't treat them like that when they are *wanted*.

When people want a human fetus or embryo, they call him or her an “unborn child” or a “baby.” We talk to them in the womb, share their cute ultrasound images, and give them names.

If this unborn child dies naturally from a miscarriage, we mourn and express our condolences for the parents who “lost a baby.” If the child dies because of an act of negligence or violence—like when a drunk driver kills a pregnant woman in an accident—we consider that an additional evil. And in many places the perpetrator is charged with two counts of homicide, not one.

None of this makes sense if the unborn are mere tissue or “clumps of cells” rather than human beings who are just much smaller than you or me.

So, how can we know if the unborn are human beings or not?

Scientifically, the answer isn't hard to find. Even pro-choice scholars agree that the unborn are simply very young members of the human species. The terms *embryo* and *fetus* refer to the stages of development that occur before the post-birth stages of infant, toddler, adolescent, and adult. An embryo is a human being from



An unborn child at eight weeks of age.

conception until the seventh week of life and a fetus is a human being from the eighth week of life until birth.

In this, humans are no different from other mammals. Go online and look at amazing photos of other mammal embryos and fetuses photographed in the womb. These aren't "potential elephants" or "potential dolphins." They are instead very small dolphins and very small elephants getting ready to be born.

This makes sense logically as well as biologically. After all, if a living thing's parents are dogs, then that living thing will be a dog. If the parents are cats, the living thing will be a cat. If the parents are human, that living thing will be human—with his or her own body and DNA, distinct from the mother.

But so what? a pro-choicer might say. *Every cell in my body is alive and human with human DNA. Is every cell in my body—hair cells, skin cells, sperm and egg cells—a human being?*

All those things are "human" in the adjective sense of the word, since they possess human DNA. But fetuses and toddlers are also human in the *noun* sense of the word. They aren't just human—they are *a* human. Specifically, they are human *organisms*, individual members of the human species.

Body cells such as skin, sperm, and egg cells can never, on their own, develop into an adult human organism. This is true no matter what environment they're in, or how much time and nutrition they get. But an embryo

or fetus, when given time, nutrition, and the proper environment (the uterus) will continue to develop into a more mature human being until adulthood, because he or she was a human organism from the very start.

Science confirms this. Embryologist E.L. Potter points out, “Every time a sperm cell and ovum unite, a new being is created which is alive and will continue to live unless its death is brought about by some specific condition.”²

An unborn child isn't something that can *develop into* a human being. It is a human being in the process of developing into a *more mature* human being.

The standard medical text *Human Embryology and Teratology* states, “Although human life is a continuous process, fertilization is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is formed.”³ Among embryologists, the preferred term for the beginning of life is *fertilization* rather than conception. Keith Moore and T.V.N. Persaud’s textbook *The Developing Human* states, “Human life begins at fertilization,” and Langman’s *Medical Embryology* also states, “Development begins with fertilization.”⁴

In 2019, Ph.D. student Steve Jacobs wrote an article called, “I Asked Thousands of Biologists When Life

Begins. The Answer Wasn't Popular." He relates, "As the usable responses began to come in, I found that 5,337 biologists, or 96 percent of the survey, affirmed that a human's life begins at fertilization."⁵ This was the case even though 85 percent of the respondents identified as "pro-choice."

Lessons from a Polaroid camera

At this point maybe you're thinking, *I know what a human being looks like, and a little eight-celled embryo is not a human being.*

But we need to be careful.

Throughout human history, have not some groups of human beings been oppressed and exploited simply because they looked different from other human beings? For example, as recently as the early twentieth century, small African pygmies were put on display in human zoos.⁶ This was considered acceptable because pygmies did not "look human," in that they did not have white skin and European stature and facial features. Of course, African pygmies looked just like humans who live in a certain geographical region of the world at a certain time are *supposed* to look. Likewise, a one-celled zygote, or an embryo, or a fetus, looks just like a human who lives in the womb at a certain stage of development is supposed to look.

Speaking of development, some people have a hard time understanding how a tiny embryo could be a

human being because they think human beings only come into existence once they have “all their parts assembled” (like how a car exists once it’s finished on the assembly line). But humans aren’t *objects* like cars. We are *subjects* who develop and maintain our identity over time. In that respect, human beings are more like Polaroid pictures than Porsches.

Polaroid cameras print images onto paper that slowly reveals the image over the course of a few minutes. Now, imagine you took a Polaroid picture of something rare, like the Loch Ness monster, and you quickly showed your friend the fresh print (which looks like a brown smudge, but will soon make you very famous). What if your friend proceeded to tear up the picture? I imagine you would be furious. But what if he said, “Chill out. That wasn’t a picture of the Loch Ness monster. It was just a brown smudge that had the *potential to become* a picture of the Loch Ness monster. Any Polaroid picture has that same potential, so what’s the big deal?”

You would rightly respond, “No! That was an actual picture of the Loch Ness monster; it just *looked* like a brown smudge at that stage of its existence. Everything that was the picture of the Loch Ness monster was fully there; you just couldn’t see it yet. You destroyed it before it developed into a picture you could recognize.”

Pro-lifers say the same when an unborn child is killed, even when he or she is just a tiny embryo. They say, “That wasn’t a ‘potential person’—it was a person

with great potential. Everything that was biologically that human being was fully there; you just couldn't recognize it yet. You destroyed him or her before he or she could develop into a human being that looks like other already-born humans."

What is a person?

Notice that we have not once appealed to religious doctrine to show that abortion is wrong. Instead, we started with a belief almost every sane person shares: it is wrong to directly kill innocent human beings. We then used science to show that the unborn *are* innocent human beings, small members of our species. Therefore, abortion is wrong because it directly kills those innocent human beings.

At this point, some might reply that perhaps the unborn are biologically human, but they aren't "persons." They aren't *fully human* like people outside the womb.

Okay, then, what is the definition of a "person"? Or, what makes someone "fully human"?

Be careful with your answer, because it may lead to strange or even grotesque consequences.

For example, if we were to say that a person is anything that can feel pain, then pests like rats and pigeons would be persons and killing them would be murder. If a person were anything that can think at a certain complex level, then fetuses definitely wouldn't be persons.

But then, neither would newborn babies, since even rats are smarter than infants (they can navigate laboratory mazes, after all).

Maybe a person is just any *human being* who can feel pain. Now, this is problematic in the first place because it would also exclude people in temporary comas or people under anesthesia. But more importantly, it seems like an arbitrary definition designed to exclude the unborn (who can't feel pain until they're around twenty weeks old). Putting such an additional, exclusive condition on who gets basic human rights (you have to be human *and* feel pain) is no different from past definitions of persons that said you had to be human *and* male, or human *and* white.

Instead, why can't we say that "all humans are persons" or that "all humans should be treated equally under the law?"

What you don't know can still harm you

But maybe abortion isn't bad for most fetuses because they aren't even aware they are being aborted? They usually don't feel pain, and they have no conscious sense of being alive.

It's true that most fetuses who are aborted don't experience mental or physical hurt from being threatened and killed, like most born people would. However, you can be *harmed* without feeling *hurt*.

Someone can violate my rights even if I don't realize what was done to me. And that's wrong.

For example, if I steal an inheritance from someone who didn't know it existed, I haven't hurt him in a way he knows about (he doesn't feel sad about the lost money), but I *have* harmed him.⁷ Or, if a doctor sexually fondles an unconscious patient, he hasn't caused her to experience *hurt* (because she didn't feel it and will have no memory of it), but he has *harmed* her by violating her bodily dignity.

And even worse than being deprived of an inheritance or being physically violated, the aborted fetus is deprived of the greatest earthly good of all: life.

Rather than basing our definition of “personhood” or “humanity” on what something can *currently do*, it makes more sense to base it on what *something is*.

Even if we can't function rationally yet (such as when we were infants) or have temporarily lost that ability (as we do when we are asleep), or even have permanently lost it (through injury or disease), all human beings are still members of a rational kind. And since we remain members of this rational, human kind throughout our entire existence, it follows that at every

stage of our existence we are persons who deserve the respect and protection due to us in virtue of *what we are*, not *what we can do*.

My body, my choice?

Another objection goes like this: *Even if the fetus is a human being with the same basic rights you and I have, shouldn't women have the right to control their bodies?*

I agree that people should be able to control their bodies. But wouldn't the unborn child also have a right to control his or her body—which includes being protected from outside harm—if he or she is a human being?

Moreover, no one thinks that people should have the right to do *whatever* they want with their bodies—for example, yell “fire!” in a crowded building to start a riot, or punch an innocent stranger on the street. And we agree that this applies even to pregnant women and their medical choices. For example, in the mid-twentieth century a drug called Thalidomide was used to ease nausea during pregnancy—until researchers discovered that it caused some children to be born without arms or legs. Today, governments all over the world ban Thalidomide. But if a pregnant woman could do *whatever* she wanted with her body, shouldn't she have the legal right to use Thalidomide, even if it harmed the child in her womb?

We can make this objection stronger and show why it still doesn't work. *Maybe pregnant women can't do whatever they want with their bodies*, someone might say, *but just as I can't be forced to donate a kidney to save someone else's life, a pregnant woman can't be forced to "donate" her womb to an unborn child.*

But abortion is not like refusing to donate an organ to a dying person. It is more like violently *removing* an already-donated organ from a *healthy* person. Imagine that you wake up one day and discovered that your kidney has been removed from your body and placed into Fred's body without your consent. Even if you wouldn't have chosen to donate a kidney to Fred, I doubt you'd kill Fred to get your kidney back.

Plus, my kidneys are for keeping me alive, not somebody else. That means I don't have a special duty to allow someone else to use them. But the uterus *is* for keeping someone else alive. Even from a purely biological standpoint, it makes no sense to speak of the unborn child as a stranger or hostile invader to whom a woman could refuse accommodation. The baby is living right where he or she belongs, and has a right to be there.

Similarly, even if a pregnant woman didn't consent to the sexual act that brought about the new human being in her womb, it would still be wrong to kill the child to redress the injustice. This brings us to another common pro-choice objection.

What about in the case of rape?

Rape is a heinous and violent act that no civilized society should ever tolerate. Rape violates a woman's bodily integrity and takes away her ability to feel safe even around people she has known for a long time. Even worse, sometimes rape victims are partly blamed for instigating or contributing to the act. This is a completely unacceptable way to treat an innocent victim of violence.

Victims of rape deserve compassion and access to healing resources as well as the resources needed to bring their attackers to justice. But should abortion be one of those resources?

Just as we should not punish or blame the woman who is a victim of rape but work to provide her with healing, we should not punish or harm the child who is conceived in rape and is also victimized by being brought into existence through an act of violence instead of an act of love. Yet, ironically, in our country it is illegal to execute a man who rapes a woman but a child conceived in rape can be killed through abortion.

Here's another way to understand the issue. Imagine that a woman has sexual relations with her husband, and the next day she is raped by a stranger. Several weeks later she discovers she's pregnant but doesn't know if the child was fathered by her husband or the rapist. A prenatal DNA test says that the husband is

the child's father. The woman gives birth to a son, and three months later the doctor calls while she is home alone with the baby. He informs her that he made a mistake and that the rapist is actually the baby's father. Should the woman be allowed to kill this product of rape in his crib?

If not, then shouldn't we forbid killing the product of rape *in the womb* for the same reason: because both are human beings?

Even some pro-choice philosophers agree that it is inconsistent to say abortion is wrong except in the case of rape (which accounts for about 1.5 percent of all abortions). For example, Nathan Nobis and Kristina Grob write, "While people sometimes consider rape a special excuse that justifies abortion, if abortions generally aren't wrong, no special excuse is needed."⁸ They make this argument to justify any and all abortions, but it can be used in reverse: if abortion generally *is* wrong, no "special excuse" makes it right.

Rape is traumatic because it is an act of violence against an innocent person. Most people have good intentions when they suggest that abortion could ease the trauma of rape, but . . . just how does violence heal? How could injustice done to an innocent child repair the injustice done to an innocent woman? Shouldn't we work to protect both the mother and child from harm and punish the person who was truly responsible for the rape?

But should it be illegal?

Even if abortion is wrong, some ask, is it wrong enough that the government should step in and make it illegal? What if we just worked to reduce abortion without criminalizing it?

But ask yourself: what acts *are* bad enough that we should have laws against them? At the top of your list are probably violent crimes like murder and rape. Yet sometimes the law needs help getting even these things right. Prior to 1970, for example, it was legal in every U.S. state for a husband to rape his wife because it was assumed that wives always consented to sex by consenting to being married in the first place. Instead of just working to change hearts and minds to reduce the number of marital rapes, activists worked to change the *law* to reflect the grave injustice of marital rape, until it was fully outlawed in 1993.

Yes, we should try to change hearts and minds, and we should work to reduce poverty and other circumstances that can contribute to gravely evil acts, but we can also legally prohibit the *acts themselves*. Justice itself demands that everyone, but especially the weakest among us, be protected under the law. They shouldn't have to live in a world where they hope crimes like abortion or rape will only be "reduced" through other means. Plus, when something is illegal, the law teaches people by example that it is seriously wrong and this,

in turn, affects public opinion and makes that thing less common.

Other people say that abortions are going to happen even if they are illegal, so why not at least make them “safe”? But saying, “Abortion should be legal so that it’s safe” is the same as saying, “It should be legal for bigger people to kill smaller people so that it’s safer for the bigger people.”

A fundamental purpose of laws is to protect the rights of the weak and vulnerable.

This also assumes that large numbers of women will still seek abortion even if it is illegal, but research shows this isn’t true. One recent study estimated that 4,000 women are turned away from abortion facilities every year because they are too far along in their pregnancies. But the study showed that nearly all these women do not break the law in order to obtain abortions. Instead, they give birth to their child.⁹

Also, there’s good evidence that making abortion illegal does *not* result in large numbers of dangerous illegal abortions. This may be because illegal abortions tend to be done in much the same way as legal ones: by medical professionals in medical offices. Even in 1960, when abortion was illegal throughout most of

the United States and health care standards were lower than they are today, Planned Parenthood president Mary Calderone said,

Abortion is no longer a dangerous procedure. This applies not just to therapeutic abortions as performed in hospitals but also to so-called illegal abortions as done by physicians. In 1957 there were only 260 deaths in the whole country attributed to abortions of any kind. . . . Second, and even more important, the conference estimated that 90 percent of all illegal abortions are presently being done by physicians.¹⁰

Jumping to the present: a 2021 article in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* found that media reports of “thousands of women dying from unsafe abortion in Malawi each year have no empirical foundation.” Not even in the developing world do claims of mass deaths from illegal abortions seem to have any merit.

Neither do we see greater mortality rates from childbirth in places where abortion is restricted. In Poland, where (at the time of this writing) abortion is illegal except in rare cases, the maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births was only two deaths per 100,000 live births.¹¹ In European countries like Germany, Finland, and Denmark where abortion is, practically speaking,

only allowed in the first trimester of pregnancy, maternal mortality rates range between three and seven deaths per 100,000 live births. Whereas in 2019, the United States had a rate of *twenty* maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, despite having some of the most permissive abortion laws in the world.¹²

What if the mother's life is in danger?

If a woman's life is threatened by her pregnancy at a point after the fetus is viable, then abortion should never be necessary. In fact, it may be even more dangerous for the mother, since it's faster to deliver the child through a Cesarean birth rather than taking the time—more than a day—to stretch the cervix wide enough to abort him or her. Wouldn't it be better to deliver the child whole and give him or her a chance to live as opposed to delivering the child in pieces with no chance?

When a mother's life is in danger during early pregnancy, when there is no chance a child could live outside the womb, pro-lifers widely agree that it's permissible for doctors to perform a life-saving operation on the mother even if it may indirectly result in the baby's death.¹³ Harm to the child is not intended or done directly. Rather, it's an unwanted (though often inevitable) side effect of the treatment to save the mother.

The most common example of this case is *ectopic pregnancies*. These occur when the newly conceived embryo implants someplace other than the uterus—in nearly all cases in one of the fallopian tubes—posing a danger to the woman’s life and making it impossible to carry the baby to viability. Unlike with complications that arise later in pregnancy, the embryo cannot be removed and safely placed somewhere else, such as a NICU unit. In this case, it is morally acceptable to surgically remove the damaged section of the fallopian tube.

Real health care protects mother
and child—and does no direct harm
to either.

Even back in 1960, Planned Parenthood’s Calderone admitted that “it is hardly ever necessary today to consider the life of a mother as threatened by a pregnancy.”¹⁴ Six decades later, medical technology has given us even more ways to protect the life and health of *both* mother and child. For instance, today it is not uncommon for unborn children who are just a few months old to have operations performed on them in the womb to treat medical conditions like spina bifida. In a grim irony, in some hospitals we find *wanted* unborn children receiving miraculous life-saving operations on one floor and *unwanted* unborn children of the same age being aborted on another.

As journalist John McCormack writes, “No abortion law in any state in America prevents lifesaving treatment for women with ectopic pregnancies and other life-threatening conditions. That was true of abortion laws in 1972, and it’s true of abortion laws in 2022.” He even quotes Planned Parenthood saying on its own website that “treating an ectopic pregnancy isn’t the same thing as getting an abortion . . . The medical procedures for abortions are not the same as the medical procedures for an ectopic pregnancy.”¹⁵ This will not change even as more states restrict or outlaw abortion following the end of *Roe v. Wade*.

Hope for abortion-wounded people

Up to this point I haven’t discussed religion, because protecting unborn children from violence isn’t a religious issue: it’s a human rights issue. I would like to close, though, with a word about God’s love for those who have been personally involved in an abortion procedure.

Some people who have obtained or paid for an abortion may wonder what happened to their child and whether God can ever forgive them for what they’ve done.

The answer is that God is infinite in his power and his love for us. That means there is no sin he can’t forgive (since he’s all-powerful) and that there is no sin he doesn’t want to forgive (since he’s all-loving). If you

feel trapped by the grief of losing your child to abortion, know that God allowed his son to die on a cross so that you and your child could spend eternal life with him. The only thing that could ever keep us from God's abundant mercy is ourselves, and that is the last thing our loving God wants us to do.

If you have been wounded by an experience with abortion, whether you are a woman or a man, I recommend you contact a post-abortion healing ministry like Rachel's Vineyard (<https://www.rachelsvineyard.org/>). Local pregnancy resource centers may also be able to connect you with a pro-life counselor who can help you through this process.

I'd like to leave you with these words from Pope St. John Paul II, a brilliant author who often wrote on what he called the "special dignity of women." Regarding women who have had an abortion, he had this to say:

The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly, what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance.

The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the sacrament of reconciliation. To the same Father and his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child. With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life.¹⁶

Just remember that “the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life” are not restricted to those who have personally experienced abortion. All people who care about human rights can join in being a voice for the voiceless. It is my hope that everyone who recognizes the inhumanity of abortion will have the courage to defend the humanity of the unborn. Together we can work to save precious lives and build a more peaceful and just world.

Recommended Reading

- ▮ *Persuasive Pro-Life: How to Talk About Our Culture's Toughest Issue* by Trent Horn. The author of this booklet also wrote a book-length defense of the pro-life position that teaches people to graciously defend unborn children.

- ▮ *Tearing Us Apart: How Abortion Harms Everything and Solves Nothing* by Ryan T. Anderson and Alexandra DeSanctis. This book shows that abortion is not only bad for unborn children but also for women and society as a whole.

- ▮ *Unplanned: The Dramatic True Story of a Former Planned Parenthood Leader's Eye-Opening Journey Across the Life Line* by Abby Johnson. Once a Planned Parenthood clinic director, Johnson describes her conversion to becoming one of the leading defenders of unborn children.

- ▮ *The Ethics of Abortion: Women's Rights, Human Life, and the Question of Justice* by Christopher Kaczor. This is one of the most in-depth philosophical defenses of the pro-life position. Dr. Kaczor expertly refutes even the toughest objections to the pro-life position.

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- 5 Steve Jacobs, “I Asked Thousands of Biologists When Life Begins. The Answer Wasn’t Popular.” Quillette, October 16, 2019. Available online at: <https://quillette.com/2019/10/16/i-asked-thousands-of-biologists-when-life-begins-the-answer-wasnt-popular/>. Jacobs’s survey was part of his research for his dissertation submitted in 2019 to the University of Chicago under the title “Balancing Abortion Rights and Fetal Rights: A Mixed Methods Mediation Of The U.S. Abortion Debate.”
- 6 See Phillips Verner Bradford and Harvey Blume, *Ota Benga: The Pygmy in the Zoo* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993).
- 7 This example comes from philosopher Robert Wennberg, who writes, “If I were cheated out of an inheritance that I didn’t know I had, I would be harmed regardless of whether I knew about the chicanery. Deprivation of a good (be it an inheritance or self-conscious existence) constitutes harm even if one is ignorant of that deprivation.” Robert Wennberg, *Life in the Balance: Exploring the Abortion Controversy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 98. Quoted in Francis Beckwith, *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case Against Abortion Choice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 145.

- 8 Nathan Nobis & Kristina Grob, *Thinking Critically About Abortion: Why Most Abortions Aren't Wrong & Why All Abortions Should Be Legal*, (Open Philosophy Press, 2019), 50–51.
- 9 Ushma D. Upadhyay, et al., “Denial of Abortion Because of Provider Gestational Age Limits in the United States,” *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 104, no. 9 (2014) 1687–1694.
- 10 Mary Steichen Calderone, “Illegal Abortion as a Public Health Problem,” *American Journal of Public Health Nations Health*, vol. 50 no. 7, July 1960, 949.
- 11 “Maternal mortality ratio,” *The World Fact Book*, Central Intelligence Agency, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/maternal-mortality-ratio/country-comparison>.
- 12 Donna Hoyert, “Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2019.” Available online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality-2021/E-Stat-Maternal-Mortality-Rates-H.pdf>. See also Michelle Ye Hee Lee, “Is the United States One of Seven Countries That ‘Allow Elective Abortions After 20 Weeks of Pregnancy?’” *The Washington Post* (October 9, 2017).
- 13 “Operations, treatments, and medications that have as their direct purpose the cure of a proportionately serious pathological condition of a pregnant woman are permitted when they cannot be safely postponed until the unborn child is viable, even if they will result in the death of the unborn child.” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services,” 6th edition, (2018), paragraph 47.
- 14 Mary Steichen Calderone, “Illegal Abortion as a Public Health Problem,” *American Journal of Public Health Nations Health*, vol. 50, no. 7, July 1960, 948–949. Calderone was referencing a 1958 Planned Parenthood conference that took place before Alaska and Hawaii were states. She says in other places that a woman’s threat of suicide would justify abortion, and she never mentions a state where abortion is prohibited even if a woman’s life is in danger.
- 15 John McCormack, “Stop Lying about Abortion Laws and Ectopic Pregnancies” *National Review* (June 30, 2022). Available online at: <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/stop-lying-about-abortion-laws-and-ectopic-pregnancies/>
- 16 *Evangelium Vitae*, 99.