

Don't Just Sit There!

By Rev. Robert Fleischmann, National Director, Christian Life Resources

The legalized killing of unborn children through abortion has been a part of the American landscape since January 22, 1973. The death toll has surpassed 60 million babies. Now you know. You cannot claim ignorance. These are verifiable facts. This is the truth. So how do you respond? Generally, three responses come to mind:

Apathy – “A lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern.” Those apathetic about the plight of others either reflect an ignorance of God’s instruction to love others (Matthew 22:39; 25:35-40; Philippians 2:3-5) or demonstrate a disordered prioritization of life by putting self ahead of others.

Conviction – “A firmly held belief or opinion.” The fact that you are reading this article suggests your conviction about this issue, but conviction alone is hollow (James 2:14-26). The humorist, Will Rogers, once said: “Even if you are on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.” A conviction without action – even a strong one – is only an idea.

Action – “Doing something to achieve an aim.” Action is the materialization of conviction. It holds to a value and then sets out to reflect that value in doing something to express its priority.

Which of these three describes you? Most find ourselves teetering between “conviction” and “action.” I want to nudge you in the direction of “action.”

Motivation

I love children. I have witnessed the birth of all five of my children. I have held them, hugged them, and swayed back and forth to calm them. Babies’ cuteness can serve as sufficient motivation to also protect unborn children – but that’s not quite the case.

Unborn children are different than living children who can be held and cuddled. Unborn children can’t be seen. They cannot grasp your finger or rub their soft cheek against yours. They can’t be held close to feel their gentle breathing. Your motivation to action must be more than emotional or tangible – it must be principled.

John wrote, “*We love because he first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). Motivation to act with commitment towards others begins with an understanding of the kind of commitment and love that was shown to us. Scripture puts it this way: “*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

Think about it! “*While we were still sinners.*” It can be hard to be a sinner and yet warm up to other sinners. Imagine the perfect God, before whom sinners could not stand, sacrificing his Son to save sinners. Think of all the times we confessed our sins and returned to our sinful living. What does God do in response? He forgives our wickedness, rebellion, and sin (Exodus 34:6). Now that’s commitment.

The motivation to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8-9) must be rooted in a genuine and heartfelt awareness of our own sinfulness (Ephesians 2:1). We need to find ourselves at the foot of the cross, looking up and realizing, “He did this for me.”

This knowledge compels us not only to hold an opinion about abortion, but to become forces of good on the issue.

Staying Motivated

Sustaining this motivation isn’t easy. The full force of evil fights us – the devil, his demons, a sin-infected world, and our own flesh. Moving from inactivity, or little activity, to greater activity can ignite doubts and challenges. If we are not steeped in the Word of God, we can be swayed by these evil forces to make decisions most compatible with evil.

Billy Graham once wrote: “Through the years of experience I have learned that it is far better to miss breakfast than to forego a session with his Word. Not that Bible reading is some kind of religious fetish which brings good fortune, but that I myself lack decisiveness and purpose and guidance when I neglect what is more important than my necessary food.”

Motivation is found in the message of our salvation. Motivation is sustained with continued emersion into that message.

Action

Abortion is a “passion” issue. As we imagine unborn children being killed, we are ignited with righteous indignation. Early activism often fosters a charge into action regardless of the collateral damage. A student of Scripture, however, sees more at stake than just an unborn baby. We become concerned about souls. Jesus

said, “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?” (Luke 9:25).

Our motive is not to win an argument or make a point. We are to love those with whom we differ and express genuine concern not only for their bad decisions, but for their souls. Let’s engage proportionately with a consideration of four actions: Needs, Opportunities, Resources, and Skills.

Needs – Consider the needs. What is the status of abortion where we live? Is there an abortion clinic in our community? Are the number of abortions high in our state? Do we have more poor people or wealthy people where we live? If we cannot forbid the practice of abortion, what can we do instead to make it the least desired of all available options? Do we need more education on the topic? Do we need more community resources to help single mothers and poor families? Is our congregation perceived as a place of compassion and help, or is it cold and unconcerned? By identifying needs, we can use this brainstorming process to ask the hard questions.

Opportunities – Opportunities might also be understood as circumstances. Are there forums for us to express Christ-like concern for others within our community? Are there places to get help? Is there a place in our community to serve, to write, to speak up, etc.? Do the demographics of our area reveal a class of people in need of help? Is there loving pro-life activity already going on in my area that I can join?

Resources – We need resources to transform opportunities into action. Yes, such opportunities can take money, time, and networking. Do we have political connections or access to a meeting place? Do we have a network of like-minded friends to begin brainstorming? Are finding the time and finances to make a difference out of the question or merely a matter of restructuring and reprioritizing things in our lives?

Skills – Perhaps we know people who can speak or write eloquently. Maybe we enjoy helping, fixing, driving, calling, or encouraging. Some people are leaders; some are followers. Scripture is clear that gifts are allocated to people in different proportions (Romans 12:3-8). The lack of a gift or desired skill does not excuse us from our call to action (1 Peter 4:10). The late UCLA basketball coaching legend, John Wooten, once said, “Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”

Sometimes our obstacles might not involve opportunities, resources, or skills, but, rather, our attitude. Translating all of this into action can most certainly be inconvenient if not challenging. Moving from lethargy to activity requires change, and change is almost never easy.

More Than Me

We are conditioned to work for rewards and recognition. Speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves offers few rewards and little recognition. We are instructed, however, to think more of others than ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4). We are to offer ourselves as sacrifices (Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5) to the will of God. None of this is easy.

This kind of service is a challenge – a BIG challenge. The story is told about a missionary society that wrote David Livingstone and asked, “Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you.” Livingstone wrote back, “If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don’t want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all.”

In a world of sin there is a lot working against us as we seek to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Again, the right motivation provides the stamina to make the sacrifices and do the things to reflect this reality: our efforts should be about others and not ourselves.

How?

As you know, it is easy to become emotional about this issue. However, in setting out to correct a wrong, Scripture says to do this with “great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2). Despite the horror of abortion and the illogic of a decision to take innocent life, we are to provide answers and assistance with “gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Why? Because our ultimate goal is to point people to the Creator and Redeemer of all life. We cannot do that if we build a wall.

Nurturing a relationship to talk about Jesus does not involve arguing, yelling, threatening, name-calling, mocking, or harassing. Remember, we are to love as we have been loved. We should demonstrate the kind of patience with others that we expect God to have with us. Based on that standard, none of us can justify wall building. We should be building bridges.

It has been long enough. Too many lives have been lost. There is no justification in allowing the abortion numbers to grow. The time has come to end our inactivity. Don’t just sit there. It’s time to do something. Start with small steps. But start. It’s about time!