

“Still in It for Life” Bible Study

People will often wonder why the candidate polling at only 2% doesn't just quit, why the team down by 20 doesn't pull their starters and accept the loss, and why Christians don't just declare the culture war lost and the pro-life cause unworthy of further investments. But there are good reasons why we are still in it for life.

1. A conversation you are in turns to the matter of abortion policies here in our country. After a while, one of your friends expresses her exasperation and says, “I really don't get it. This was decided in 1973 and still Christians are fighting against it. It's over, it's done, and it's not even imaginable that we would ever go back to the way it was, but still people give their lives to pro-life efforts and others have given millions of dollars to pro-life groups. Doesn't God have something to say in the Bible about not wasting time and money on lost causes?” If we assume this friend is a non-Christian, why might she express such thoughts?

The friend could also be a Christian. Why might a believer express such thoughts?

2. Consider these “life issues” that Christians are concerned about. For each, what is its current status or situation in our society, and how has that changed over time?
 - Abortion

 - Euthanasia

 - Assisted Suicide (“Medical Aid in Dying”)

 - In Vitro Fertilization

 - Embryonic Stem Cell Research
3. Read the following passages and identify what they teach us regarding life, how we live, and how we make decisions about life:

Genesis 5:1-3

Genesis 9:5-7

Exodus 20:13

Exodus 20:14

Psalm 31:14,15

Psalm 139:13-16

Psalm 143:10

Isaiah 44:24

Matthew 6:10

Hebrews 13:4

How do those passages help explain why Christians are concerned about each of these issues which we discussed above?

- Abortion
 - Euthanasia
 - Assisted Suicide (“Medical Aid in Dying”)
 - In Vitro Fertilization
 - Embryonic Stem Cell Research
4. One of the Lord’s prophets once thought that preserving the lives of strangers was not and should not be his business. **Read Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-5,10; 4:1-3,11.** Something was going to happen that Jonah had no interest in stopping by preaching — what was it?

What did Jonah do at first?

What happened when Jonah finally did what he was supposed to?

The people of Nineveh were known for their wickedness and were enemies to Israel. How did God want Jonah to see their lives?

5. Some believers decide not to live out their faith, act on their convictions, or speak up to protect life or defend the innocent because they are afraid of what might happen to them if they do. **Read Luke 21:7-19**. What does Jesus tell us that Christians should expect before he returns at the end of the world?

What does he tell us will happen when we stand with him and speak as he has spoken?

How does this encourage us to be more active and courageous on life issues among our friends and families, and in our community and nation?

6. When will we know that we are done and that there is no longer any need speak up about life?
7. **Read Proverbs 31:8,9** and **Matthew 5:13-16**. Explain how doing what the Proverbs passage tells us is being salt and light to the world.
8. The Lord's seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 all address Christians who were living in difficult times and in societies that challenged their faith. They were tempted to compromise, to give up their faith, and to just stop caring. **Read Revelation 2:1-7**. What did the people in the Ephesian church need to repent of?

What instruction or encouragement might there be here for Christians in our society who are happy to know the truth of God's Word and what it says about his will on life issues, but who are unwilling to actually do anything about it?

9. **Read Revelation 2:8-11**. What was the Lord's chief concern for the people in the Smyrnan church?

What instruction or encouragement might there be here for believers in our society who are unwilling or afraid to be identified by their speech or actions as prolife Christians?

10. **Read Revelation 3:14-22.** What did the people in the Laodicean church need to repent of? How did the Lord feel about it?

What instruction or encouragement might there be here for Christians in our society who have come to feel that issues like abortion, euthanasia, or assisted suicide are just not things worth caring about, let alone doing anything about?

11. What are some things that all of us can do in our vocations as Christians and citizens to protect and promote life in our society?

What are some things that some of us, but not necessarily all, can do in our vocations as Christians and citizens to protect and promote life in our society, as we have the gifts, resources, and opportunities?

12. Imagine a situation in which every pro-life political candidate running at the state or national level won his or her election this fall. Does this mean that Christians in our nation would be able to take a break from advocating for life, praying, and working to advance pro-life policies and practices? Explain.

13. Our opening question in this study involved the proposition that pro-life Christians should just consider their cause lost and leave the field to the victors. Explain why we will not abandon the contest and are instead still in it for life.

“Still in It for Life”

Bible Study — LEADER’S NOTES

People will often wonder why the candidate polling at only 2% doesn't just quit, why the team down by 20 doesn't pull their starters and accept the loss, and why Christians don't just declare the culture war lost and the pro-life cause unworthy of further investments. But there are good reasons why we are still in it for life.

1. A conversation you are in turns to the matter of abortion policies here in our country. After a while, one of your friends expresses her exasperation and says, “I really don't get it. This was decided in 1973 and still Christians are fighting against it. It's over, it's done, and it's not even imaginable that we would ever go back to the way it was, but still people give their lives to pro-life efforts and others have given millions of dollars to pro-life groups. Doesn't God have something to say in the Bible about not wasting time and money on lost causes?” If we assume this friend is a non-Christian, why might she express such thoughts?

(NOTE: The leader might need to steer people away from addressing the argument itself; the point is what would prompt such thinking, not how wrong the thinking might be.)

A nonbeliever, especially one who has no clear idea of the life issues at stake, is not likely to understand why Christians can't just “give up and give in.” To her, this is just frustration at wasting money and time on an issue that everyone else has moved on from. It's old news.

The friend could also be a Christian. Why might a believer express such thoughts?

(Again, you might need to steer people away from an attempt to answer the argument or indignation that a Christian could say such a thing.)

*A believer making this comment might honestly be motivated by concern for her brothers and sisters spending so much of themselves and their resources in what seems like a futile effort to change the unchangeable. Likely she also does not fully appreciate what is at stake and has never had her heart broken to think of all the children who have had their lives snuffed out in the womb because of the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*.*

2. Consider these “life issues” that Christians are concerned about. For each, what is its current status or situation in our society, and how has that changed over time?

Note that it is not necessary for the study leader to be “up” on all of these latest issues, though it could help. Knowing the basics well enough to be able to explain what's at stake should be sufficient, and chances are someone in your class can supply more information.

- Abortion
- Euthanasia

- Assisted Suicide (“Medical Aid in Dying”)
 - In Vitro Fertilization
 - Embryonic Stem Cell Research
3. Read the following passages and identify what they teach us regarding life, how we live, and how we make decisions about life:

Genesis 5:1-3 — *God made man in his likeness, male and female; after man sinned, all Adam’s children were in his sinful likeness, and thus sinful and subject to death and eternal punishment as he was.*

Genesis 9:5-7 — *God is very clear that no human has the right to take the life of another; that right belongs to God and breaching that brings harsh judgment. At the same time, God wants us to extend and multiply life in the world by having children.*

Exodus 20:13 — *God protects life by forbidding murder*

Exodus 20:14 — *God protects marriage and the family by forbidding anything that breaks or abuses the bond between husband and wife.*

Psalms 31:14,15 — *Our times — the beginning, middle, and end of our lives — is in God’s hands, not our own or anybody else’s. He’s the one who gets to decide when we live or die. See also Deuteronomy 32:39.*

Psalms 139:13-16 — *God has made us, and still makes every human being, with wisdom and precious care; we came into existence not at birth, but in our mothers’ wombs.*

Psalms 143:10 — *Our desire as believers is to do God’s will and be led by his Spirit in the way we live our lives.*

Isaiah 44:24 — *God formed each of us in the womb — just as he created all things.*

Matthew 6:10 — *Our prayer to our Father in heaven is that his will be done, on earth as in heaven.*

Hebrews 13:4 — *God’s standards for sex and marriage are clear, firm, and unchanging. No one other than the husband and wife are to play any role in the marriage or its intimacy, and no one is to interfere with the relationship or come between them.*

How do those passages help explain why Christians are concerned about each of these issues which we discussed above?

- Abortion — *An unborn child, even one just formed in the womb, is still a unique and precious life to God (and to us), and to snuff it out is murder, which God condemns.*
 - Euthanasia — *Only God has the authority to decide when it is someone’s time to die, not a relative or doctor or any other kind of expert, regardless of how much that someone appears to be suffering.*
 - Assisted Suicide (“Medical Aid in Dying”) — *Only God has the authority to decide when it is someone’s time to die, not even if he or she wants to die because of what he or she considers unbearable suffering.*
 - In Vitro Fertilization — *While Christians should be very wary of “playing God” with in vitro fertilization, the greater issue is what is to be done with the resulting embryos. As each is a unique and precious life, each should be brought to full development in the womb and into this world to live his or her life, but in practice many embryos are “sacrificed,” abandoned, or allowed to die — which is clearly stepping into territory that belongs to God alone.*
 - Embryonic Stem Cell Research — *Again, this is stepping into the Creator’s territory, but we are most disturbed by the treatment of embryos — human children — as things to be experimented on and then disposed of when their purpose has been served.*
4. One of the Lord’s prophets once thought that preserving the lives of strangers was not and should not be his business. **Read Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-5,10; 4:1-3,11.** Something was going to happen that Jonah had no interest in stopping by preaching — what was it?
God was going to destroy Nineveh (the capital city of the Assyrian Empire) for their wickedness.

What did Jonah do at first?

He ran away — in the opposite direction.

What happened when Jonah finally did what he was supposed to?

The people all repented, from the greatest to the least, and God spared them.

The people of Nineveh were known for their wickedness and were enemies to Israel. How did God want Jonah to see their lives?

He wanted Jonah, who wanted to see them destroyed, instead see each life there as having value and worth the effort to save them.

5. Some believers decide not to live out their faith, act on their convictions, or speak up to protect life or defend the innocent because they are afraid of what might happen to them if they do. **Read Luke 21:7-19.** What does Jesus tell us that Christians should expect before he returns at the end of the world?

Troubles and calamities in the world, but particularly hatred and persecution for believers, precisely because they follow Jesus and bear his name.

What does he tell us will happen when we stand with him and speak as he has spoken?

We will be given the words we need to say and wisdom that can't be contradicted. (We might also be persecuted all the more, and even put to death, but God will still hold us close eternally no matter what.)

How does this encourage us to be more active and courageous on life issues among our friends and families, and in our community and nation?

If we know what will happen, we can prepare ourselves, and he tells us the worst that can happen. But most of all it is his promise to be with us and equip us to be witnesses to his message and truth that encourages and empowers us to take brave action — in defense of life or simply in spreading the gospel.

6. When will we know that we are done and that there is no longer any need speak up about life?

Only when Jesus returns and ends everything. Until then there will still be sin and death in the world, and so we will need to be at work and speak.

7. **Read Proverbs 31:8,9 and Matthew 5:13-16.** Explain how doing what the Proverbs passage tells us is being salt and light to the world.

Note that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus does not tell us to work at becoming salt and light; he tells us that's what we already are. Following him makes us different; standing with him makes us stand out. "Saltiness" in this case is not taste but a preservative; light brings clarity and helps other see what they could not before — in particular, God's nature, holiness, and grace. When we speak up for the weak and innocent we are serving our society as salt, preserving what is good and moral against the decay and rot of our world; when we defend those who cannot defend themselves we show the work of Christ in our lives, which points others to God and his grace and glory.

8. The Lord's seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 all address Christians who were living in difficult times and in societies that challenged their faith. They were tempted to compromise, to give up their faith, and to just stop caring. **Read Revelation 2:1-7.** What did the people in the Ephesian church need to repent of?

They had forsaken their first love, falling from a great height. What had properly engaged their passions when they first came to faith no longer stirred their hearts.

What instruction or encouragement might there be here for Christians in our society who are happy to know the truth of God's Word and what it says about his will on life issues, but who are unwilling to actually do anything about it?

Such Christians should repent of their apathy and indolence and instead rekindle their love for all the things God loves, including the gift of life. They need to "get back in the game."

9. **Read Revelation 2:8-11.** What was the Lord's chief concern for the people in the Smyrnan church?

They were going to suffer greatly for following him, and he wanted them to stand firm and faithful and overcome.

What instruction or encouragement might there be here for believers in our society who are unwilling or afraid to be identified by their speech or actions as pro-life Christians?

Jesus knows what we're going through, and he cares. He has not forgotten us, and he will take care of us, even if the worst happens when we take our stand with him and on the truth.

10. **Read Revelation 3:14-22.** What did the people in the Laodicean church need to repent of? How did the Lord feel about it?

Their faith had become neither hot nor cold; it was lukewarm. The Lord was ready to spit them out. (Perhaps use coffee to illustrate: someone may like hot coffee and also like iced coffee, but room temperature coffee makes him or her gag.)

What instruction or encouragement might there be here for Christians in our society who have come to feel that issues like abortion, euthanasia, or assisted suicide are just not things worth caring about, let alone doing anything about?

Such Christians need to see how they have become lukewarm in their faith and repent of their indifference. The follow-up or fruit of repentance is then to start caring about, and doing something about, these very issues.

11. What are some things that all of us can do in our vocations as Christians and citizens to protect and promote life in our society?

Answers might include: Prayer for our government and its officials; prayer for the unborn, disabled, and vulnerable; prayer that our society change its attitude toward our Christian witness and that it begins to defend and protect life at every stage; etc. Voting for candidates and propositions that support life issues. Freely speaking to defend life when asked by friends, family, coworkers, etc.

What are some things that some of us, but not necessarily all, can do in our vocations as Christians and citizens to protect and promote life in our society, as we have the gifts, resources, and opportunities?

Answers might include: Giving money to organizations like Christian Life Resources; speaking out publicly; running for office; becoming a judge; becoming a lawyer; helping with pro-life campaigns; promoting pro-life values and causes in your own social circles.

The point with these questions is to get people to realize that there are things everyone can and should do, while also challenging them to consider things beyond their “comfort zone” or what they usually do.

12. Imagine a situation in which every pro-life political candidate running at the state or national level won his or her election this fall. Does this mean that Christians in our nation would be able to take a break from advocating for life, praying and working to advance pro-life policies and practices? Explain.

Hardly. In the first place, nothing changes overnight. Second, no matter how committed these politicians might be, changing laws, regulations, institutions, and especially people’s minds is going to take a long time. Another point to remember is that politicians are people like us, which means they are sinners, and they will disappoint us; putting too much trust in them to do our work for us will not turn out well.

For a specific example, consider how if Roe v. Wade were to be overturned by the Supreme Court, or undone through congressional action, that would only turn the question of abortion back to the individual states, some of which have laws on record banning abortion, others of which have extremely permissive laws on abortion. Our work would be far from finished — and that’s not even considering the non-abortion life issues we are also concerned about.

13. Our opening question in this study involved the proposition that pro-life Christians should just consider their cause lost and leave the field to the victors. Explain why we will not abandon the contest and are instead still in it for life.

This question is meant to personalize the lesson a little more. Reasons that might be given include: God’s command. God’s love for us that compels us then to love others — especially the weak and vulnerable. The great and continuing need for our witness in the public square. Love for the unborn, elderly, disabled, etc.

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