



SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

Abortion

Why We Are Pro-Life, and Why Only the Gospel Will Change It

The church is pro-life and anti-abortion, because God sees and forms every child in the womb. But politics, truth and science will not end abortion. Only the gospel will, so the way to protect the unborn is to reach the women facing that decision.

PREACHED BY

Pastor Jason Mayfield

DATE

July 12, 2026

SERIES

We're Honoring to All People, Week 4 of 5

MAIN TEXT

Psalms 139:13-16

Contents

01 Sermon Transcript

02 Preaching Notes

03 Scripture List

04 About the Preacher

WATCH THE MESSAGE

youtu.be/3BW2Br_zT_g

0:00 Clear is kind: where we stand

7:30 What the Bible says about the unborn

13:19 The hard cases, and God in the pain

20:07 Contraception and fertility treatment

25:08 Politics will not fix it: Roe v. Wade

34:45 Truth and science will not fix it

40:36 Only the gospel will fix it

42:55 One in four women: this is about people

47:47 Too urgent to slow down

Sermon Transcript

Amen. You can join me in Psalm 139 this morning, Psalm 139. I'm not going to spend a lot of time in any isolated scripture today. I'm going to be moving and grooving a little bit as we preach. I just want to be clear this morning that the subject matter that I'm going to be preaching on, I'm aware, is sensitive for many people. And I do not anticipate on being long-winded this morning. I recently heard a pastor say that a message doesn't have to be eternal to be immortal. Y'all will get that later. Oh, immortal. But I don't want to be incredibly long, but I do just want to let you know that we've kind of been anchoring this series this month.

We're talking about some complicated topics. We've anchored it in this thought. We believe here at this church that clear is kind. And so we're not trying to be ugly by stating any of these positions. We're just trying to let you know where we are on any given issue at any moment. Amen? And so clear is kind. And I do want to also warn you as we get into today's topic, which is abortion. We're going to talk about abortion today. And as we get into this, I find a lot of pastors, a lot of political people, and the political people are probably more apt for this than the pastors are, but tend to get deep into science.

And I just want you to know I'm not going to give you any scientific dissertation today. If I did, it would all be wrong. I'm not a scientist. And so, in fact, my science class was very firmly standing between me and a high school diploma. Amen? So I'm not a scientist by any stretch of the imagination. So don't expect that today. One of the things that we've been demanded from people online throughout this series is, well, why didn't you talk about this? Why didn't you talk about this? Why didn't you talk about this? Why didn't you talk about this? Well, the first reason is that the Golden Corral summons us.

Amen? There's a lunch following this service. Hallelujah. That's reason number one. But the other reason is we can't speak to every single issue and every single thing. And so I'm going to do my best to be faithful to the scripture, to our position. And my goal today is for everyone to walk out of here and everybody watching online to just be able to know where our church stands on the issues. Everybody with me? Okay. So let me start here. I want to give you kind of a general stance of where we are on the issues of abortion. Just so you know, if you needed to put us in a camp, we are pro-life, we are anti-abortion.

I'm going to say that up front. And that's where we are. I want to read something to you that I think is a good statement for us to start with this morning. "Every human life from conception through death is to be valued, respected, nurtured, and protected. God is both giver and sustainer of life. He alone has the power to determine its beginning and ending. The scriptures regularly treat the unborn child as a person under the care of God. The Bible always recognizes the prenatal phase of life as that of a child and not a mere appendage to the mother's body to be aborted at will.

The Assemblies of God and Saraland Church views the practice of abortion as an evil that has been inflicted upon millions of innocent babies and that will threaten millions more in the years to come. Abortion is a morally unacceptable alternative for birth control, population control, sex selection, and the elimination of the physically and mentally handicapped. Certain parts of the world are already experiencing serious population imbalances as a result of the systematic abortion of female babies. The advocacy and practice of so-called partial birth abortion of babies is particularly heinous.

There is no biblical basis for a pregnant woman to terminate her unborn child. The long historical tradition of orthodox Christianity prohibits abortion. We therefore expressly deny that this supposed legal 'right' automatically confers upon the pregnant woman the moral right to abort her unborn child." Now, before I read that, boy, you could cut the tension in here with a knife right now. Before I read that, I said this phrase, our general stance. Our general stance. And this is why I'm using that phrase. It's because there is something called nuance.

There is something called nuance. There's a spectrum for people when it comes to nuance. You've got some people who don't believe in any nuance anywhere in their life. No nuance. And then you've got other people and other groups that believe in all nuance. Every situation should be carefully examined for that situation because there's all nuance. And then there's where the average individual with a brain lands, called some nuance. And nobody with nuance falls right in the middle of the spectrum. So you're going to have people on the right of an issue that have nuance.

You're going to have people on the left of an issue that have nuance. You're going to have people in certain theological camps that are still going to be over here, but they have nuance. They have the ability to look at a situation and go, "Hey, maybe more is going on than what I think." And then you have people on the other side. And so there's nuance. And we want to be a church that embraces the nuance of people's lives. We want to meet people where they are. Amen. And my position I have found in my life is firm on everything until I'm the one going through it.

Everybody's got a made up mind until they find themselves in a particular situation. Amen. And so I want to make sure that I'm clear on what our positions are, but I also want to be clear on positions. I have no dog in the fight of holding positions. I'm not real interested in having a position and making my position known and telling you where we stand on this issue or that. What I care about is not positions. It's people. And I have found that in a lot of these types of topics, pastors fall into the trap to find a good opportunity to posture. Maybe a better word for it is to peacock and to show off and get attention.

And I just want to be clear. I am less interested in posturing. I am more interested in pastoring. We are a church that is for all people. If you believe that, give the Lord a praise this morning. So I want to talk through a handful of things today, but I think it would be good if we started with what the Bible says. Somebody say, "The Bible says." Let's start with what the Bible says. Psalm 139, Psalm 139 verse 13.

PSALM 139:13-16 ESV

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

It says, "For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works.

My soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them." Before you ever had a day, every day of your life

written in the book of the Lord. I love this passage of scripture, particularly when we talk about the unborn. Firstly, because we see how involved the Lord is with the creation of life, with the creation of a baby.

God is in it, but there's a particular line in this passage of scripture that in today's era and with this topic that I think is extremely profound, and it's verse 16. It says, "Your eyes saw my unformed substance." Your eyes saw my unformed substance. I don't know if you've heard the way that some people tend to talk about babies when they're inside their mother. You'll hear it's a fetus or it's an embryo. My favorite is it's a clump of cells. But my friend, that clump of cells is a baby, because God sees that baby in its unformed substance, in its unformed substance.

So a baby is a baby, whether it's running around your house screaming or whether it's in its mother's belly, it's a baby. It's a baby.

ECCLESIASTES 11:5 ESV

⁵ As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

Ecclesiastes chapter 11 says, "As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything." One of the reasons I'm not going to try to get with everybody on the science this morning, outside of my own scientific ineptitude, is because conception, pregnancy, having a baby, this is not the work of science. It's not the work of biology. This is the work of God.

It's the work of God who breathes life. It's the work of God. And so we can sit back and we can talk about this and we can talk about that. But I'm reminded of what Jesus said to the Sadducees when the Sadducees were having a theological debate. And I think when we're having scientific debates over this issue, I think Jesus looks at us and says, "Hey, the problem is you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God."

MATTHEW 22:29 ESV

²⁹ But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

This isn't about coming down to dotting i's and crossing t's. This is about the work of God. When a baby is conceived and birthed, it's the work of God.

HOSEA 12:3 ESV

³ In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God.

Hosea chapter 12 says this: "In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God." He's talking about Jacob and Esau. I've read this this morning in Genesis, where Jacob in the womb reaches out and grabs his brother Esau's heel.

GENESIS 25:26 ESV

²⁶ Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

And when Esau comes out, there's a hand that's reached out holding that heel. Jacob in his mother's womb showed that there was intention and purpose on his life. There was destiny on his life because he reached out and grabbed that heel. There was a prophetic word that was spoken over him by his mother and his father that declared that from him, the lineage of God's people would come, that he would receive the blessing, that he would be the one, and the older, Esau, would serve the younger.

GENESIS 25:23 ESV

²³ And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."

Why did that happen? Because he reached out and grabbed a heel while he was still in the womb. I'm telling you, when there's a baby right here — which I know it looks like I got one in there. Amen. But when there's a baby right here, I'm telling you there's intention and purpose on that baby's life. Amen. Hallelujah. So that leads us to this. We have to answer this question. It's important for us to go, all of us, on the same page. When does life begin? When does life begin? Well, most evangelical pastors would tell you this. I agree with it. This is going to be the position of our church, that life begins at conception.

Life begins at conception. But I will tell you that just based on what I have read to you right now, you could potentially back that up even further and say that life does not begin at conception. It begins in the mind of God. God is involved with the birth of people. God was involved with you way before you were a baby. God was involved with you way before you were a little kid. God was involved with you way before you were a teenager driving your parents absolutely crazy. That was a therapy moment. I apologize. Amen. God is involved with you now and God wants to be involved with your family.

So what I want to do this morning is, from that position, I kind of want to just talk through some different vignettes of this issue. I don't know what else to call it. This isn't so much a message with a flow as it is — we're just going to change scenes every few minutes. It's not like a sitcom or a drama TV show. It's like, y'all remember variety shows? And we're just going to change the scene every time that we get up to the end of something. So bear with me this morning. Are you ready? Okay. Usually when we talk about abortion, the big thing that comes up, the big argument that comes up, the big defense that comes up when we talk about abortion — and I just want to say before I say this, I feel my preach coming on me a little bit.

I'm feeling good. Anything I say this morning, I want you to know, I love you, I care for you, and I am not intending in any way to be ugly or dismissive of anybody's situation. I'm just — now I'm ready to go. Okay. And so I love you and we're here for you. But when abortion comes up, when abortion is mentioned, oftentimes the argument that is presented and the reason that is presented that we should keep abortion around is because we have a duty to people who've been through horrible situations. And we know that people actually do go through horrible situations, and we want to be mindful of that.

But when we talk about abortion as a whole, and then that is brought up, it is easy in our mind to think that every abortion that occurs is to take care of somebody who walked through a life situation that was unspeakable. That, in fact, is rarely the case. I want you to see these numbers this morning. I'll step out of the way so you guys can see them. These are the reasons when women are surveyed on why they had an abortion — women who have received abortions, I should say. Now, I want to let you know that these numbers equal more than 100% because usually women select more than one reason.

It's usually more than one reason, but you'll see at the top, right there at 74%, they're not ready. It would interfere with work, school, or caregiving. Set right below that, and you'll see they can't afford a baby right now. Then relationship problems. They don't want to be a single mother. Something's going funky in the relationship. Another one there is they're finished having children. They've decided they're past childbearing ages. Then you'll see there's a drastic drop. Drastic drop. Right 1% by that: pregnancy from rape. 0.8% risk to the mother's health.

0.5% fetal health problem. Less than 0.5% pregnancy from incest. 0.1% risk to the mother's life. I'm sorry, 0.1% is risk to the mother's life. What I just want you to see here is while there are certainly incredibly grotesque and sad and devastating situations that occur that can result in someone choosing the route of abortion, and I think anybody in here with at least one pumping vein in their heart would go, "I do understand the bottom of that list. Even if I'm not for it, even if I'm not with it, I get that." But the lion's share, over 98%, are convenience reasons.

And I don't want to dismiss anything that anybody has, or any decision that's happened, but I'm just telling you right now that I don't know if "me and my boyfriend are going to make it" is a great reason to have an abortion. Right? "We don't have the money right now." My God, everybody in here with kids didn't have the money. And then you had kids and found out you weren't doing as good as you thought you were. I never understood how you could get married and bring two joint incomes together and have less money. Don't make a bit of sense, does it? But there are horrendous situations, and I do not want to act like there aren't, and we do have to acknowledge the nuance there, but I just want to tell you that most of those reasons aren't there.

They're convenience issues. And I do want to state the obvious in the room, that I do not understand pregnancy. I do not understand giving childbirth. I will never have that visceral understanding. I gave birth to a kidney stone a few years ago, and I decided I was done. I was through. And I just want to say this, if you ever find yourself in a situation where you do have an unwanted pregnancy due to some type of heinous circumstance, I just want you to know — the counseling session where you walk into the room with me and you go, "Hey, I'm pregnant. I'm thinking about having an abortion until I can make another \$10,000 a year."

That's an easy counseling session for me. I can speak to that right now. If you walk in and you go, "My uncle raped me and I'm pregnant," I'm going to tell you, you're going to have your pastor just squirming. God, that is horrible. But I will say this, if I can give you any encouragement, that even if you find yourself there, God can do a great work in your pain. And it is easy for me on the other side of that to say, "Trust the Lord." But I believe God can do a great work in your pain. I won't ask you to turn there. I don't have it on the screen, but I'd turn your attention to Genesis 38.

Genesis 38 is a story of Judah who gets a woman pregnant, Tamar, I believe. And it's a grotesque story of prostitution and incest. But God uses that pregnancy, and from that lineage comes the Messiah. Jesus Christ comes from that lineage.

GENESIS 38:13-30 ESV

¹³ And when Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," ¹⁴ she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. ¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ He turned to her at the roadside and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" ¹⁷ He answered, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." And she said, "If you give me a pledge, until you send it—" ¹⁸ He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹ Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood. ²⁰ When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. ²¹ And he asked the men of the place, "Where is the cult prostitute who was at Enaim at the roadside?" And they said, "No cult prostitute has been here." ²² So he returned to Judah and said, "I have not found her. Also, the men of the place said, 'No cult prostitute has been here.'" ²³ And Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as her own, or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat, and you did not find her." ²⁴ About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." ²⁵ As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant." And she said, "Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." ²⁶ Then Judah identified them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her again. ²⁷ When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb. ²⁸ And when she was in labor, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." ²⁹ But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out. And she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore his name was called Perez. ³⁰ Afterward his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.

And I just want to encourage you, if you walk through any difficult situation like that, do not underestimate what God can do in your situation and in your life. And we will walk with you as best as we can, but I want you to know, do not underestimate what God can do in your situation. Now, I want to change scenes again.

I want to talk to you for a couple of minutes just about contraception and abortion. There is some muddiness in the relationship between contraception and abortion. And it's mostly getting muddled up by people talking. I mean, that's where most of the mud comes from. You know, there are Christian denominations that look at contraceptives as thwarting the will of God. There are others that view contraceptives as equal with abortions. There are some portions of Christianity that believe in what's called maximum fertility. I don't know that I could handle Ashleigh at maximum fertility.

Okay, I don't even know what that means, you know what I'm saying? And there are others, which are probably the majority, who would simply say that contraceptives are a matter of conscience. And I'll tell you, that's where I land, that's where we land. And if you want to use something that prevents pregnancy, I say go for it. We don't want no more kids either. Amen. I don't know what to tell you. We're with you. We're for it. And here, that's our official stance. And where contraceptives do get a little funky, though, is that there are some contraceptives that have been introduced and

people are talking about that it just gets blurry between where they stop being contraceptives and they become abortion.

And we're not sure where that line is sometimes. And the science is kind of moving back and forth over, you know, five and ten year periods. And obviously we do not support termination of pregnancies here. However, I just want to let you know that I'm not a doctor and I'm not a scientist and I can't speak to hardly any of this stuff. If you're using something and it's working for you, I, you know, rock and roll. You know, I mean, so if it's working, that's good. Here's a general guiding rule that I would give you that's just good for conscience. Because I'm going to be honest with you, there are moments with stuff like this where, you know, almost the demand from the people on the internet —

Who are these people on the internet, by the way? But the demand from the people on the internet, or the demand from that aunt you got — y'all know that aunt? She about to roll up in you Thanksgiving with something crazy? Amen. Okay, so the demand from them is almost like, "Hey, you need to go get a master's of biology so you can make sure that you're honoring the will of the Lord." And I just tell you right now, I'm going to hell. I just am not going to make it. If I got to get a master's of biology, it's not going to happen. And so you need some good, just some good things for conscience to get you where you need to be.

And here's a good rule for conscience. If you are actively preventing pregnancy in any way, if you're actively preventing pregnancy and you think or know you are pregnant, shift gears, take a test, see a doctor, let's have a baby. That is my position, our position on contraceptives here in this church. But I also want to just make mention about fertility treatment for a moment. Not only are there a lot of opinions in some respects being handed down from denominational heads on this stuff right now, not only are there opinions on contraceptives, there's also a lot of opinions on fertility treatments.

I would refer you to the biology master's degree I do not have. Before I say this, I know a bunch of people who have struggled to conceive and have babies. And I just want you to know, regardless of what's going on outside of them — cloning you in a machine, where it might get funky at that point. Amen. But whatever, if you need help having a baby, if you need assistance having a baby, we support you. We stand with you. We'll come pray for you. We'll believe God in your process. I will dedicate your baby when he comes or when she comes. We're not going to stand in your way.

We're not going to tell you you're wrong. You pray, get a word from the Lord, be spirit led. And if you feel like God is leading you to go and get help having a baby, honey, go get some help having a baby. Amen. And we stand with you. I just want to make that clear because I know a lot of denominational leaders and a lot of churches and a lot of pastors are having opinions on this stuff right now. And I get that there's some science that's funky, but I don't understand any of it. Smarter guys than I am, apparently. Amen. I also want to talk to you just for a moment about this series not being about positions.

This really isn't about positions. This is — we're about people. We're about people. And when it comes to positions, the position we're all interested in is the political position on the issue. And I'm about to make my political position on this real plain and everybody's going to leave mad because I'm going to tell you exactly what I think. I want to say this plainly. We are for the unborn in this church. We are for the unborn. But when it comes to the politics of abortion, the lines get drawn real clearly. It becomes Republican, Democrat, and it all comes down to Roe v.

Wade. Everybody starts talking about the legalization, the legality of abortion. And I just want to tell you, a few years ago, Roe v. Wade was overturned. I was surprised by that. I never thought it would happen. I really didn't have a dog in that fight because I never thought it was coming. I'm surprised. I thought it was good fodder for votes. And I still think it

is. I still think that's how it gets used. Roe v. Wade got overturned a few years ago. And I'm going to be honest with you. I was not one of the pastors that got on the internet and started throwing off confetti cannons and having a celebration.

And I was called weak and woke and all the things you call preachers when you don't like them anymore, I guess. But there were two reasons that I did not do that. There's two reasons I didn't go celebrate because this was some great victory for the church and for the Lord and for Republicans. And apparently Roe v. Wade being overturned was just the greatest thing that happened. And the first reason I didn't really respond is because, first, I didn't even know if it was real. I never thought it would happen. So when they said it, I said, "Huh? What?"

It'd be like if I opened up my bank thing and I had \$3 million in there. I'd think, this could be a mistake. I'm going to give it a minute before I go spend this money. I'm not buying a Vette today. You know what I mean? And so that's the first reason I didn't really respond. I kind of just stayed quiet. But the other reason is — and listen, I don't want everybody to be like me when it comes to politics, though, man, I wish I could just put this into some people's brains — is like, I kind of want to see how it shakes out. It's weird because these people talk all the time and we know that usually when they talk, they lie.

But here's what's crazy. They talk, they lie, and you believe everything they tell you. Knowing when they talk, they lie. And we just go, okay. You know? And so I want to see how things turned out. Well, I'm glad I waited. I want you to see this. This is what happened when Roe v. Wade came. If you'll watch — this is some, let me get out of your way so you can see it — these are some abortion numbers over about the last 60 years here. When Roe v. Wade came down, when that decision was made, when it was legalized, they say there were about 745,000 abortions at that time.

They don't really know. The numbers before that are tricky because it wasn't legal. So it was somewhere between 200,000 and 2 million abortions. So, you know, not a small gap there. We don't know how many people were having abortions before Roe v. Wade, but we do know that by 1980, it had gotten up over 1.5 million. And I'll be honest with you. I don't know that that is because abortion was legalized or because it was the 80s. Right? So it increased in the 90s. It went up to 1.6 million at its peak. And then by the 2000s, it started to decline. It started coming down.

By the 2010s, it was still coming down until it hit a rock bottom. It finally goes under a million by 2020, which is a huge number to cross over. We're talking about 1.6 to under a million. I mean, that's down over 30%. That's pretty good. But since 2020, while Roe v. Wade has been overturned, we are now back on an upward trend of abortions. And the numbers here get funky, because if you look at, let's say, for instance, Alabama's abortions, they've gone down to virtually nothing. They're virtually nothing. However, if you will look at people's credit card bills, you'll notice they're spending more money on gas because they're driving to other states and getting them.

So the number is a false flag that we're winning. No, the abortions in Alabama are still up. The abortions happening in Alabama are down. There's a difference. We're seeing it increase. It's still going up. So here's what I want you to understand. I do not think abortion should be legal. Let me start there because, you know, this is "let me mishear everything the preacher says" month here at Saraland Church. I don't think abortion should be legal, but this really isn't about legal and not legal. Too many of us, we are finding our victories on the political plane.

To overturn Roe v. Wade and abortions increase is by all metrics a loss. If you were trying to lose weight and you started eating salad and you were getting bigger, you can't go, "I'm eating salad. I'm doing great." No, you're getting fatter, honey. I'm telling you it's not working. So if the victory is Roe v. Wade got overturned, it's a hollow victory. All it comes down to is where you fall on the political spectrum. This is all about the points on the field. It has nothing to do with real

life. If the numbers are going up, we lose. We lose. And the problem is that when we trust in politics and we trust in the government to solve these issues, we always lose.

We always lose. The goal is not for Roe v. Wade to be overturned. The goal is for abortions to stop, for them to stop. Isaiah chapter 30 says this.

ISAIAH 30:1-3 ESV

¹ “Ah, stubborn children,” declares the LORD, “who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; ² who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! ³ Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.

I want you to listen to this. The Lord says to Israel, “Ah, stubborn children” — you could say, “Ah, stubborn church, stubborn Christians” — “declares the LORD, who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin, who set out and go down to Egypt without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt.”

We’re talking about trusting in governmental leaders, trusting in the government resources. Verse three: “Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn into your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.” I feel like it’s a little bit of a refrain, but I’m telling you, every time you look at these politicians and you think, “Ah, that’s God’s man. Ah, this is the one. Ah, he’s going to do it. He’s the best thing that’s happened to the church in 50 years” — my God, if a president of the United States or a congressman or a senator or a mayor or a governor is one of the best things that’s happened to the church, we need new pastors.

We need new missionaries. We need new denominational leaders. My God. But we keep looking at these things, these false flags. The psalmist said, “I look to the hills.

PSALM 121:1-2 ESV

A Song of Ascents. ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? ² My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Where does my help come from? It comes from you, Lord.” The inference there is, I look to the hills. Where does my help come from? It don’t come from them hills. It comes from the Lord. So when we trust in politics, we’re going to be put to shame. When we trust in the government, we’re going to be put to shame. Am I saying we should rise up and have a resistance? It’s not what I’m saying.

It ain’t the worst idea, but it’s not what I’m saying. Amen. The solution to abortion — I need you to hear me — it’s not going to be found in the political arena. It will not be found in the political arena. They’ve done everything we had been promising. We got everything we wanted and it’s getting worse. Your salad is making you bigger. It ain’t working. So the gospel is the only solution. The gospel is the only solution. That’s where I want to spend the rest of my time with you this morning. The gospel is the only solution. Let me just state again, just for anybody who’s typing my email into their phone right now, I am pro-life and anti-abortion.

I am pro-life and anti-abortion, but I have virtually no hope that this will change through any other means than through the gospel of Jesus Christ. So let me take the scenic route on the close to this message. When it comes to the topic of abortion, you're going to hear this a lot. You're going to hear, "We've got to stand for truth. We've got to stand for truth." So I just want to make sure we're clear. Politics is not going to solve it, but we've got to stand for truth. Here's the thing. I got to thinking about this. We've got to stand for truth. I got to processing this this week.

If you think about it, at times truth is almost entirely ineffectual. Like truth almost doesn't get it done. And we think the answer is always the truth, because there's a couple of Bible verses that talk about the truth that are, you know, pretty conditional on who is walking in that truth. Truth without Jesus Christ doesn't set you free.

JOHN 8:31-32 ESV

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

I mean, I could stand up here for 30 minutes and talk about how this shirt is black, and these pants are black, and the shoes are black, and, you know, I mean, I could — that don't help nobody. It's true. It doesn't do anything for you.

You have to have your life submitted to Jesus Christ to some degree to get anything off of. So truth can be entirely ineffectual. I thought about this. Consider this. Jesus says that he is the truth in John 14.

JOHN 14:6 ESV

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

He says he came in truth in John 18, and that he speaks the truth in John 8.

JOHN 8:45 ESV

⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

Then in a conversation at the highest political level that he had found himself in his life, he's talking to Pilate about the truth. And Pilate just says, "What is truth?" Well, man, this is Jesus.

JOHN 18:37-38 ESV

³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." ³⁸ Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him.

He is the truth. He came in the truth. He spoke the truth.

He is the truth. And he's speaking to power. We talk about truth to power. This is a truth to power moment right here. He's speaking to power, and the power just goes, and it's entirely helpless. There's a blue-in-the-face quality to truth.

You ought to know that. You got somebody in your family who you've told and told and told, and they keep doing and doing and doing the wrong stuff. There's a blue-in-the-face quality to truth. And the truth is that life starts at conception. That's the truth. Life starts at conception, but I want you to look at what Americans believe.

Life starts at conception. 35% of people would agree somewhere around conception. Sometimes it's fertilization. Sometimes it's ovulation. There's different views on it. It's always around conception. So 35% would agree with you more or less. 14% believe it happens when there's a heartbeat. They don't believe it starts at conception. They believe it, but the truth is it starts at conception. That doesn't matter. They believe — 14% believe it starts at a heartbeat. 4% believe somewhere in the rest of the first trimester. 4% believe somewhere in the second trimester.

And then there's 11% who believe somewhere in the third trimester when there's viability, meaning when a baby could probably live on its own if it was birthed. And so it takes viability for 11% to believe that. 18% don't believe that a life actually begins until that baby comes out, till you see the baby. And 13% really haven't thought about it. I mean, well, the truth is that life starts at conception, but the truth isn't — I mean, we've been saying that. I mean, is anybody living under a rock? You never heard anybody say life starts at conception? I mean, I feel like that's a pretty heavy talking point on this.

Only 35% are on the same page with you. So truth isn't getting it done. Truth isn't getting it done. So legislation doesn't get it done. Politics doesn't get it done. Truth doesn't get it done. "Well, it doesn't get it done because they don't believe in God. They believe the science." Oh, okay. Let me go back over here. So let me show you what the science says. For all these people who don't believe in God, they believe in science and that's why they don't believe it. This is what it says. These are biologists that were surveyed, about 5,600 of them.

And by the way, they lean super left. You'll see 92% of the people surveyed were Democrat, 85% pro-choice, 63% of them aren't even religious in any degree. They believe in the religion of science. Okay. So these aren't the folks you agree with that said this. These are biologists. 96% of those people said that it happens at fertilization, at conception. That's what the science says. That's the truth. That's what they say. 4% say it's something else. That's pretty crazy that educated people have such a different view than the average American too, by the way.

But here's the issue. That's the science. Well, all right, well. Politics don't work. The truth isn't working. The science isn't working. None of it's working. None of this stuff is working. None of this is getting any of it done. Why? Because the only thing that will work is the gospel of Jesus Christ, period, period, period. And then any exception to that is people who happen to stumble into the truth by accident. It's a blind squirrel is going to find a nut once every one, you know what I'm saying? That's the only exception to it. Now, and I hope you hear me that this isn't good preacher lines.

This is the truth. I'm telling you, nothing will work but the gospel. The gospel is the only thing that'll work.

ROMANS 1:16 ESV

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans chapter one, verse 16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." It's the gospel. It's the power of God. It's the power of God. It's what makes the difference. It's what makes the change. And I want you to hear me. I want our church to help a

lot of women. I want to do all this stuff. I know people who have buses that go out and help women who are considering abortions and they open up clinics.

And I love all of that. And I want to do all of that. You know, I can't afford a \$3,500 air conditioner coil right now. So I want to do it all. I want to do it all, but we can't do everything. But here's the thing. And if I could do it, I know this: money won't fix it. Support won't fix it. Resources won't fix it. Adoption won't fix it. None of that's going to fix it. And I think all those things are great. Like I said, I want to do them, but they won't fix it. The only thing that fixes it is the gospel of Jesus Christ, because the gospel gives a lady who had an abortion a lifeline to redemption, a lifeline to a restored life.

It gives her a lifeline to be able to step into the purposes of God for her life and get out from under guilt and shame, bad dreams, haunting thoughts. It gets her out of that. The gospel rescues a woman who's on the other side, who's made the decision. Much more than that, the gospel can also give power to a woman who's considering abortion. It can help her who's considering. Why? Because you might say, for whatever reason, "I'm going to have an abortion." Maybe it was something traumatic, but maybe you're feeling the weight of, we don't have enough money, or my relationship is funky, or my mom is all over me, or my dad has disowned me, or whatever that may be, and maybe the woman's thinking, "I'm going to get an abortion because I can't handle — this is more than I can bear in my life."

The gospel is the power of God. It'll give you power to overcome. It'll give you power to do things that seem impossible. It'll raise you up, sit you on a high place, and you can do things that are beyond your own ability, because the gospel works. It works. It works. The gospel changes people, and it changes lives. The name of this series is For All People. For All People. And I want to just reiterate, this message isn't so much about a position as it is people. It's about people, man. I think, at times, the abortion thing can feel really far off. On one hand, it feels like an ever-present issue, because we're, like, watching the news.

On the other hand, it feels like, who does this impact, really? Like, who's really dealing with this? I mean, it's not something that's just in our face all the time with people who are talking about having the issues, or walking through it. And as I was studying, I saw some numbers. And let me also just mention this. I know it can also feel far off, because we think that this is a liberal issue. And I just — the truth of the matter today, most of this room is conservative. And so, I know for us, we felt, "Well, that's a liberal thing. They're for it.

We're against it. So they're doing it, and we're not." But I just want you to know, everybody I know who has had an abortion is a conservative. Like, I want you to understand, this isn't as far off as you may think it is. And I want you to see these numbers, because this surprised me. The percent of women who will have an abortion in their lifetime is 25%. One in four women, one quarter of all women — in fact, it's by the time they're 45 — will have an abortion in their lifetime. Not liberal women, not black women, not white women. American women, one in four.

One in four. The more generous estimates, one in seven, which ain't that much greater. One in four women. 15% of women will consider an abortion. They will seriously consider it, but they will decide not to for whatever reason. 60% of women aren't going to consider it at all, which I think is great. But it amazes me, one in four women considering abortion. You think this isn't close? It is likely that a woman either in your house, in the house on the right of your house, the house on the left of your house, or the house directly across from your house, has had an abortion.

Huge. It's a huge issue. One in four women. One in four women in Saraland. One in four women in Satsuma. One in four women in Creola. We've got areas south of us that are dreadfully impoverished. If you don't think these numbers skyrocket the minute you hit Chickasaw and then go into the stratosphere the moment you get into Prichard, you'd be

out of your ever-living mind. People all around us dealing with this issue. They're either making the decision, have made the decision. This is about people. This is about people. The only way to protect the unborn is to reach the women who will make the decisions whether or not to go through with these procedures.

All of the posturing and bantering and positioning does not change the weight that a woman feels that takes her to that decision. Nobody's rolling into an abortion clinic because it's a fun Thursday afternoon. Nobody's doing that. There's a weight on people. There's a weight. Whether you believe it, whether you understand it, it doesn't matter, because not having enough money to afford a child may hit you completely different than it hits your neighbor. When you live under crushing anxiety — and this isn't about court decisions and people and politics and presidents.

This is about people walking through issues. This is about women who feel it. Now I know we haven't even touched the men who are affected by this. This is a real issue. It's real. Today is the next to last Sunday in this series, which also — we're ending our value series that we've been doing. Just a couple of weeks, it'll be my one-year anniversary here. And before I ever came here, we were kind of between Huntsville and here, because Jocelyn was starting marching band, and so Ashleigh was living down here. I was living up there and going back. The house was empty and I just took time.

I had them in my office for a while and I finally got rid of them, but I took time. I took big post-its, big easel post-its. I put them all over the walls in our apartment. All the furniture was gone, and so I said I would stay in there with markers and these big post-its, and I started to write down things that I believed that the Lord had for this church. And at some point the eight values all came together. These eight values for our church. So we've spent just under a year — we're going to finish preaching all eight of these values. And when I got here I did my first Sunday, and that was just it.

It was my first Sunday. I'm done, right? Gotta get through the first one. Amen. So I did my first Sunday and I preached the message called "Every Pastor Leads Differently." Every pastor leads differently. I know some of you are sitting there going, "God, you didn't say the half of it." Amen. And every pastor leads differently. And then the next week we got into the values. I'd heard from the Lord. I had values for you. First value I preached on was that we're building everything on Jesus Christ. We build everything on the finished work of Jesus Christ in this church.

This is a Jesus-centered, spirit-filled church for all people. So for four weeks I preached on the cross and the finished work and why that's important. And then the second series I did was on the Great Commission.

MATTHEW 28:19-20 ESV

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

It was — as we're exiting this, I'm starting to feel a release in the pulpit, and so I'm measuring myself here. I apologize, just trying to see where we're going to go with this. Second series was Great Commission. The value is we are relentless about the mission. We relentlessly pursue the mission. I'm convinced that people are dying and going to hell, and if a church doesn't get in between them and that, it's going to happen.

Somebody's got to do something. Somebody has to do it. So we had to change some of our ministry model here because I'm just going to be honest with you, things weren't going great. We were up against some serious stuff. We had to make some serious decisions. And it is my eighth week here and I'm getting ready to preach a message on the Great Commission. It's the third week of the series on the Great Commission. I'm standing back here. I'm walking

through the room before church and I'm walking right here and I see a gentleman. I can tell he is visibly upset, like he is angry. And as strong-willed as I may be, I do care about people.

I do care about y'all. I love y'all. So I stopped to try to get him to start talking with me and tell me what's going on, and to be honest with you he was reluctant, because he knew what I didn't and that was how mad he was. And in the middle of that, talking to him — it took maybe about 90 seconds — he is red-faced. He is angry, and he is letting me know that I am ruining this church. Eight weeks. And don't feel bad for me, because to be honest with you, at eight weeks I wasn't totally sure I wasn't ruining the church. Amen. And so, but he wasn't helping my confidence. Amen.

Then he says this phrase. He says, "And all you preach about are people outside of the church. You don't even preach about people in this church." Here's the kicker. The guy who's angry with me is my biggest giver. He's the biggest giver in the church. And, Pastor John, I needed his check bad. We were in a bad spot month to month, and I had a decision I had to make right there, eight weeks in. Pastor, it's fun. Eight weeks in I had to decide, am I going to stick to the mission, or am I going to run off, and am I going to kowtow to whatever people think I ought to do?

Am I going to give people what they want? Am I going to bend over backwards and lead this church the way everybody thinks the church ought to be, or am I going to hear from the Lord and get in here and do what God has for our church to do? I made a decision. He's not here and his money ain't here no more either. I'll tell you something. It would be easy — and I didn't take it lightly — it'd be easy to slam the brakes on it. Eight weeks. Go slow like everybody's told me to do. Every pastor's told me to do. Every denominational person's — just go a little slower.

Just go a little — you don't have to get there today. You don't have to do it today. You don't have to get it done by tomorrow. You just, you can go a little slower. It'll be better for your people. I had people, when I went to a denominational meeting for the state, I had people stop me: "Well, if I'd have done it, I'd have probably gone a little slower. I'd have probably just slowed down a little." Folks, it doesn't — one in four women are headed to an abortion clinic because they have no hope and they feel helpless. They don't have anywhere that they can go, and for whatever reason they have found themselves either in a church and not receiving, or not in a church.

I don't have time to wait. It is urgent. I will come back to it the same way I said it then. I will say it now. People need a church where they can experience the power of God, the life-changing power of the cross. They need a church where their life is changed through the gospel, and we're not going to sit around and not do anything. One in four women. One in four women. I wasn't going to use this for this moment, but I am feeling it right now. The notes are far away. We have more work to do, church. We are not done. I am in the process right now of making decisions that are not fun decisions to make.

They're not easy decisions to make. They're not. But we're making decisions and we're doing some stuff. We're in a season now — when I got here I was having to kind of hit the brakes on everything so we could survive. Now we're in a season where I've got to extend my faith and do some things that I'm not even sure that we ought to do right now. I'm going to outkick my coverage a little bit. I'm going to reach further than I ought to. We're going to see God do some things. And I'm much more comfortable in this mode than I am in this mode, but we're about to see God do some things.

Have you noticed recently that there is a palpable change in our church? There is a significant shift in this house. Why? I think it's because we're willing to go after people. I think the willingness to go after people, the willingness to set all the other stuff aside and say we're going to do it. We're going to be a church that God can trust with the people of this

community. I'm not talking about being the church that sings the songs you like or preaches the message you like or wears the clothes you like or has the right amount of haze in the room, amen?

And I'm talking about being a church that God can trust with people. And when he says, "I've got somebody who needs something, I can put them in that church because I know that they're going to take care of them," and if the pastor doesn't shake their hands, somebody's going to shake their hands. If the pastor doesn't know their name, somebody's going to know their name. I want to see this church be a church that God can trust with sinners, and I believe we're starting to see that pay off, amen? And there's a change in the church. There's a change. And I just want to know, do I have any spiritually in tune people in the room that have noticed there have been three shifts in this church this year?

It felt like the first quarter, the second quarter, and then I think we're about to hit another one. Another shift. God's about to do something again. The third shift is coming. My God. Everyone with your hands lifted all across the room. Father, we thank you for what you're doing in this house. We thank you for what you're doing in this church. God, we thank you for what you're doing in families in this church. Father, I thank you that you're blessing people who are serving in this church and who are giving to this church. Father, I thank you that you are pouring out a mission anointing.

God, I thank you for the yes that you've released over some people's lives in this house. In Jesus' mighty name. Father, we thank you for what's happening here. God, give us every person that is heartbroken and is hurting. Give us every person who is slipping through the cracks in churches. Father, I ask you that you would fill our church with people who for whatever reason have fell through the cracks in the churches that they're in. God, that you would give this church the ability to be a healing place, a restoring place, to be a place where people can come back to faith and experience the goodness of God rather than the hurt of the local church.

Father, give us people who — give us a unique anointing to minister to. Father, today I pray specifically for people in our area who are considering abortion or who are heading towards that end result. God, I ask you that something would happen. Something would happen. Something would happen that would cause them to say, "Let me give church a try." And Father, I thank you that we know our limitations. There's only so many things we can do. But God, I thank you that you by the anointing of the Holy Ghost can begin to draw people in to this place. God, draw the hurt, draw the broken, draw the poor, draw those who need you, draw those who need a change in their life.

Father, I ask you to send us people whose marriages are falling apart. God, give us teenagers who are making bad decisions. Father, give us all the rough people in the schools, in Jesus' name. Father, give us everybody you can trust us with, and we're going to believe you to see change in their life, in Jesus' name. I just feel like — listen, I don't go here often. I'm feeling like praying in the Holy Ghost. If this freaks you out, I'm sorry, but, you know, be freaked out, I guess. Just, if you got it, pray in the Holy Ghost with me. Thank you, God. Thank you, God.

Thank you, God. Thank you, God. God, thank you, Lord. Hagar, who gets pregnant in an ugly, nasty situation — she gets pregnant, and then the wife of the man who got her pregnant gets ugly with her and runs her off. She's a prime candidate for an abortion. Just feeling the Spirit of the Lord here. I don't do this stuff often, so y'all better lean in. Prime candidate for abortion. She is on her way to run away. An angel of the Lord visits her. The angel of the Lord says, "Hagar, where have you come from, and where are you going?" This ain't in the notes, folks.

We're off the reservation. "Where have you come from? Where are you going?" Tells him the problems. Says, "Turn around, go back, the Lord's going to take care of you." The Lord's going to take care of you. And Hagar names that place — a Hebrew name I can't pronounce, amen — but she names that place "the God who sees me." The God who sees me.

GENESIS 16:7-13 ESV

⁷ The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.” ⁹ The angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress and submit to her.” ¹⁰ The angel of the LORD also said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.” ¹¹ And the angel of the LORD said to her, “Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction.” ¹² He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.” ¹³ So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.”

God, give us people who come to this church and feel seen by you. Feel seen by you. God, people who roll up in here, and whatever situation they’ve walked in, whatever they’ve dealt with in their life, whatever their experience is in other churches, Father, that they’ve come in here and something, whether it be the hospitality or the preaching or the singing or something, they feel seen by you.

God, we know you see all. We know you see all people, but to feel seen by you, to know that you’re the God who sees me. You’re the God who — God, give us women who need to be seen by you. In Jesus’ mighty name. Thank you, Lord.

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This is the fourth message in a five-week series on honoring all people, anchored in one conviction: clear is kind. This message states the church's position on abortion plainly. It is also a message about people more than positions. Keep both in view the whole way through.

This subject is sensitive for many people in the room. Some have had an abortion. Some have pressured someone into one. Some carry a story they have never told. Be caring in delivery while staying clear. Say early, and mean it: "I love you, I care for you, and I am not intending in any way to be ugly or dismissive of anybody's situation."

Do not try to deliver a scientific dissertation. The message moves in short scenes, like a variety show, and lands on the gospel. Several sections use survey data and charts; know your sources and have the charts ready.

Introduction

PSALM 139:13-16 ESV

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

I am aware that what we are talking about today is sensitive for many people. Throughout this series we have anchored everything in one thought: **clear is kind**. We are not trying to be ugly by stating our positions. We just want you to know where we stand.

I am not going to give you a scientific dissertation. I am not a scientist, and my science class stood very firmly between me and my high school diploma. And we cannot speak to every issue; for one thing, the Golden Corral summons us. My goal is for everyone here and everyone watching online to know where our church stands.

OUR GENERAL STANCE

If you need to put us in a camp: **we are pro-life, and we are anti-abortion**. Here is the statement of the Assemblies of God, which our church shares:

Every human life, from conception through death, is to be valued, respected, nurtured, and protected. God is both giver and sustainer of life; He alone has the power to determine its beginning and ending.

The Scriptures regularly treat the unborn child as a person under the care of God. The Bible always recognizes the prenatal phase of life as that of a child, and not a mere appendage to the mother's body to be aborted at will.

The Assemblies of God views the practice of abortion as an evil that has been inflicted upon millions of innocent babies and that will threaten millions more in the years to come. Abortion is a morally unacceptable alternative for birth control, population control, sex selection, and the elimination of the physically and mentally handicapped. Certain parts of the world are already experiencing serious population imbalances as a result of the systematic abortion of female babies. The advocacy and practice of so-called partial birth abortion of babies is particularly heinous.

There is no biblical basis for a pregnant woman to terminate her unborn child. The long historical tradition of orthodox Christianity prohibits abortion. We therefore expressly deny that this supposed legal "right" automatically confers upon the pregnant woman the moral right to abort her unborn child.

WHY "GENERAL" STANCE: NUANCE

I called that our *general* stance because there is such a thing as nuance. Picture a spectrum: no nuance at all on one end, all nuance on the other, and in between, where most thoughtful people land, some nuance. People on the right and the left of any issue can still have nuance: the ability to look at a situation and say, "Maybe more is going on than I think." We want to be a church that embraces the nuance of people's lives and meets people where they are.

My position on everything is firm, until I'm the one going through it. Everybody has a made-up mind until they find themselves in a particular situation.

I am less interested in posturing. I am more interested in pastoring. On topics like this, pastors can fall into the trap of posturing, peacocking to show off and get attention. But what I care about is not positions. It is people. We are a church for all people.

1. What the Bible Says About the Unborn

Have the congregation say it: "The Bible says."

Psalms 139 shows how involved the Lord is in the creation of a baby. Before you ever had a day, every day of your life was written in His book. And verse 16 is profound for our day: **"Your eyes saw my unformed substance"** (Psalm 139:16).

You will hear people call a baby in the womb a fetus, an embryo, or my favorite, "a clump of cells." But that clump of cells is a baby, because God sees that baby in its unformed substance. **A baby is a baby, whether it is running around your house screaming or in its mother's belly.**

ECCLESIASTES 11:5 ESV

⁵ As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

Conception and pregnancy are not merely the work of science or biology. They are the work of God, who breathes life. When Christians reduce this to scientific debate, I think Jesus would say to us what He said to the Sadducees: “you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29).

HOSEA 12:3 ESV

³ In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God.

In Genesis, Jacob came out of the womb with “his hand holding Esau’s heel” (Genesis 25:26). Even before Jacob was born, the Lord had spoken over him: “the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). There was intention, purpose and destiny on his life before he drew a breath. There is intention and purpose on every unborn baby’s life.

WHEN DOES LIFE BEGIN?

Most evangelical pastors would say life begins at conception. I agree, and **this is the position of our church: life begins at conception.**

But based on what we have just read, you could back it up even further: life begins in the mind of God. God was involved with you long before you were a baby, long before you were a kid, and long before you were a teenager driving your parents crazy. God is involved with you now, and He wants to be involved with your family.

2. The Hard Cases, and God in the Pain

When abortion comes up, the defense you usually hear is that we have a duty to people who have been through horrible situations. People really do go through horrible situations, and we want to be mindful of that. But it is easy to assume that every abortion is for someone who walked through something unspeakable. That is rarely the case.

[Show the chart of the reasons women give for having had an abortion.] Women surveyed could select more than one reason, so the numbers add up to more than 100%:

- At the top, 74%: not ready; it would interfere with work, school or caregiving.
- Then: cannot afford a baby right now; relationship problems or not wanting to be a single mother; done having children.
- Then a drastic drop: about 1% pregnancy from rape, 0.8% risk to the mother’s health, 0.5% a fetal health problem, less than 0.5% pregnancy from incest, and 0.1% risk to the mother’s life.

Anyone with a heart understands the bottom of that list, even if they are not for it. But the lion's share, **over 98%, are reasons of convenience.** Abortion is a morally unacceptable alternative to birth control. I don't know that "my boyfriend and I might not make it" is a good reason to end a life. "We don't have the money right now"? Everybody here with kids didn't have the money.

There are horrendous situations, and we must acknowledge the nuance. I will never understand pregnancy or childbirth; I gave birth to a kidney stone a few years ago and decided I was done. If someone comes into my office and says, "I'm thinking about an abortion until I can make another \$10,000 a year," that is an easy counseling session. If someone says, "My uncle raped me and I'm pregnant," your pastor is going to be squirming. It is horrible.

But if you find yourself with an unwanted pregnancy, even under the most heinous circumstances, **God can do a great work in your pain.**

Illustration: Judah and Tamar. Genesis 38 is a grotesque story of prostitution and incest. Judah gets his daughter-in-law Tamar pregnant. Yet God used that pregnancy: from the line of her son Perez came King David, and Jesus Christ. Do not underestimate what God can do in your situation. And we will walk with you as best we can.

3. Contraception and Fertility Treatment

There is some muddiness in the relationship between contraception and abortion, and most of it comes from people talking. Some Christian traditions see contraceptives as thwarting the will of God. Some see them as equal to abortion. Some believe in "maximum fertility." Others, probably the majority, say contraception is a matter of conscience. That is where I land, and where we land. If you want to use something that prevents pregnancy, go for it.

Where it gets blurry is that with some contraceptives, the line between contraception and termination is debated, and the science moves over five- and ten-year periods. We do not support the termination of pregnancies. But I am not a doctor or a scientist, and you should not need a master's degree in biology to honor the Lord. So here is a guiding rule you can live by in good conscience:

If you are actively preventing pregnancy, and you think or know you are pregnant, shift gears, take a test, see a doctor, and let's have a baby. That is our position on contraceptives.

A word on fertility treatment. There are many opinions coming from denominational leaders right now on fertility treatments. I know many people who have struggled to conceive. Let me be clear: if you need help having a baby, we support you. We stand with you, we will pray with you and believe God in your process, and I will dedicate your baby. Pray, get a word from the Lord, be Spirit-led, and if God leads you to get help having a baby, go get help having a baby.

4. Politics Will Not Fix It

This series is not about positions; it is about people. But the position most people care about is the political one, so let me say it plainly: **we are for the unborn in this church.**

When it comes to the politics of abortion, the lines get drawn clearly, and it all comes down to Roe v. Wade. A few years ago, Roe v. Wade was overturned. I was surprised; I never thought it would happen. I was not one of the pastors who got on the internet with confetti cannons, and I was called weak and woke for it. There were two reasons. First, I didn't know if it was real. If I opened my banking app and saw \$3 million, I'd give it a minute before I went and bought a Corvette. Second, I wanted to see how it would shake out. I am not interested in a hollow victory.

[Show the chart of U.S. abortion numbers over the last 60 years.]

- When Roe v. Wade was decided, there were about 745,000 recorded abortions. The numbers before that are hard to know, since abortion was illegal; estimates run from 200,000 to 2 million.
- By 1980, it was over 1.5 million, and it peaked at about 1.6 million.
- From the 2000s through the 2010s it declined, falling under a million by 2020, a drop of more than 30%.
- Since 2020, while Roe v. Wade has been overturned, abortions are back on an upward trend.

The numbers can be a false flag. Abortions performed in Alabama have dropped to virtually nothing, but people are driving to other states to get them. The abortions happening in Alabama are down; abortions by Alabamians are not.

Let me be clear, because this is “let me mishear everything the preacher says” month: **I do not think abortion should be legal.** But this is not about legal and illegal. Too many of us find our victories on the political plane. **To overturn Roe v. Wade and see abortions increase is, by all metrics, a loss.** If you are eating salad to lose weight and you are getting bigger, the salad is not working. The goal is not for Roe v. Wade to be overturned. The goal is for abortions to stop.

ISAIAH 30:1-3 ESV

¹ “Ah, stubborn children,” declares the LORD, “who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; ² who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!

³ Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.

You could read it, “Ah, stubborn church.” This is about trusting in governmental leaders and government resources. Those who place their hope in the government will find their shame in the government. If a president, senator or governor is the best thing that has happened to the church in 50 years, we need new pastors, new missionaries and new denominational leaders.

“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD” (Psalm 121:1-2). The inference is plain: my help does not come from the hills. It comes from the Lord.

Am I saying we should rise up in resistance? No. But **the solution to abortion is not going to be found in the political arena.** We got what we were promised, and it is getting worse.

5. Truth and Science Will Not Fix It

Let me state it again for anyone typing my email address into their phone: **I am pro-life and anti-abortion, but I have virtually no hope that this will change through any other means than the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

Let me take the scenic route to the close.

You will hear, “We have to stand for truth.” But at times truth by itself is almost entirely ineffectual. Truth without Jesus Christ does not set you free (see John 8:31-32). I could talk for 30 minutes about how this shirt is black, and it would be true, and it would not help anyone.

Consider: Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He came “to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37). He said, “I tell the truth” (John 8:45). Then, in the highest political conversation of His earthly life, He spoke the truth to Pilate, and Pilate answered, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). This was truth to power, and the power was unmoved. There is a blue-in-the-face quality to truth. You have someone in your family you have told and told and told.

The truth is that life starts at conception. But look at what Americans believe. *[Show the chart.]*

- 35% say life begins at or around conception.
- 14% say at a heartbeat.
- 4% say elsewhere in the first trimester, and 4% in the second trimester.
- 11% say in the third trimester, at viability.
- 18% say not until birth.
- 13% have not thought about it.

Only 35% are on the same page. Legislation is not getting it done, and truth is not getting it done.

“Well, that’s because they don’t believe in God; they believe in science.” Let’s look at the science. *[Show the chart.]* In one survey of about 5,600 biologists, a group that leaned heavily left (most identified as Democrats and as pro-choice, and most were not religious), **96% said life begins at fertilization.** That is what the science says. And still only 35% of Americans agree.

Politics is not working. Truth is not working. Science is not working.

6. Only the Gospel Will Fix It

ROMANS 1:16 ESV

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The gospel is the power of God. It is what makes the difference.

I want our church to help many women. I know people who run buses and open clinics to help women considering abortion, and I love it. I see our church active in those things in the future. But money won't fix it. Support won't fix it. Resources won't fix it. Adoption won't fix it. All of those are good, but **only the gospel of Jesus Christ will fix it.**

- **For a woman who has had an abortion**, the gospel is a lifeline to redemption and a restored life. It can lift a heavy conscience and get her out from under guilt and shame, bad dreams and haunting thoughts, so she can step into the purposes of God for her life.
- **For a woman considering an abortion**, the gospel gives power to overcome. Maybe it is something traumatic. Maybe it is the weight of “we don't have enough money,” “my relationship is falling apart,” “my mom is all over me,” or “my dad has disowned me.” The gospel can give her strength to face what may well look like insurmountable odds, and to do what seems impossible.

The gospel changes people, and it changes the world.

7. One in Four Women: This Is About People

The name of this series is For All People. This message is not about a position. It is about people.

Abortion can feel far off, especially for conservatives. We think, “That's a liberal thing. They're for it, we're against it, so they're doing it and we're not.” But **every person I know who has had an abortion is a conservative.**

[Show the chart.]

- About one in four American women will have an abortion by age 45. Not liberal women, not Black women, not white women: American women.
- Another 15% will seriously consider it and decide not to.

It is likely that a woman in your house, or the house to your right, to your left or across the street, has had an abortion. One in four women in Saraland. In Satsuma. In Creola. And in the impoverished communities south of us, the numbers are surely higher.

The only way to protect the unborn is to reach the women who will make the decision whether or not to go through with it. All the posturing and positioning does not change the weight a woman feels that takes her to

that decision. Nobody walks into an abortion clinic because it is a fun Thursday afternoon. And we have not even touched the men who are affected by this.

Conclusion: Too Urgent to Slow Down

This series is one of our eight ministry values. Before I came here, I covered the walls of an empty apartment with big easel sticky notes and wrote down what I believed the Lord had for this church, and the eight values came together. My first series was on the value that we build everything on the finished work of Jesus Christ. My second was on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20): we relentlessly pursue the mission. I am convinced that people are dying and going to hell, and if a church does not get in between them and that, it is going to happen.

Illustration: the biggest giver. It was my eighth Sunday as pastor, and I was about to preach the third message on the Great Commission. Walking through the auditorium before service, I saw a man who was visibly upset. I stopped to talk with him, and within about 90 seconds he was red-faced, telling me I was ruining the church. Then he said, “All you preach about are people outside the church.”

Here is the kicker: he was the biggest giver in the church, and we were in a bad spot month to month. I had to decide whether I would stick to the mission or bend to what people thought I ought to do. I made a decision. He is not here anymore, and neither is his money.

It would have been easy to slam the brakes. Pastors and denominational leaders told me to slow down. But one in four women are headed toward an abortion because they have no hope and feel helpless, either because they are not in a church or because they are in one and not receiving. **I don’t have time to wait. It is urgent.** People need a church where they can experience the life-changing power of the cross.

We are going to be a church that God can trust with people. Not a church that sings the songs you like or has the right amount of haze in the room, but a church where, if the pastor does not shake someone’s hand or know their name, somebody will. A church God can trust with sinners.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray over the church and over women considering abortion: that God would send the hurting, the broken, the poor and those who have slipped through the cracks of other churches; that this would be a healing and restoring place; and that something would happen to cause women heading toward abortion to say, “Let me give church a try.”

Illustration: Hagar. Hagar became pregnant in an ugly situation and was driven off by the wife of the man who got her pregnant. She was a prime candidate for an abortion. As she ran, the angel of the Lord met her and asked, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” (Genesis 16:8). He sent her back with a promise, and she called the Lord who spoke to her “a God of seeing” (Genesis 16:13): the God who sees me.

Pray that everyone who walks into this church, whatever they have walked through, would feel seen by God, and that God would send women who need to be seen by Him.

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

PSALM 139:13-16

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

ECCLESIASTES 11:5

⁵ As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

HOSEA 12:3

³ In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God.

ISAIAH 30:1-3

¹ "Ah, stubborn children," declares the LORD, "who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; ² who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! ³ Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.

ROMANS 1:16

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

MATTHEW 22:29

²⁹ But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

GENESIS 25:26

²⁶ Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

GENESIS 38:13-30

¹³ And when Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," ¹⁴ she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. ¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ He turned to her at the roadside and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" ¹⁷ He answered, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." And she said, "If you give me a pledge, until you send it—" ¹⁸ He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹ Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood. ²⁰ When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. ²¹ And he asked the men of the place, "Where is the cult prostitute who was at Enaim at the roadside?" And they said, "No cult prostitute has been here." ²² So he returned to Judah and said, "I have not found her. Also, the men of the place said, 'No cult prostitute has been here.'" ²³ And Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as her own, or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat, and you did not find her." ²⁴ About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." ²⁵ As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant." And she said, "Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." ²⁶ Then Judah identified them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her again. ²⁷ When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb. ²⁸ And when she was in labor, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." ²⁹ But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out. And she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore his name was called Perez. ³⁰ Afterward his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.

PSALM 121:1-2

A Song of Ascents. ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?
² My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

JOHN 14:6 ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

JOHN 18:37-38 ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him.

JOHN 8:45 ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

GENESIS 25:23 ²³ And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”

JOHN 8:31-32 ³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

MATTHEW 28:19-20 ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

GENESIS 16:7-13 ⁷ The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.” ⁹ The angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress and submit to her.” ¹⁰ The angel of the LORD also said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.” ¹¹ And the angel of the LORD said to her, “Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction. ¹² He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.” ¹³ So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.”

ABOUT THE PREACHER



Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

INSTAGRAM

@thejasonmayfield



KEEP LISTENING

Never miss a message.

Watch, listen and follow Citylight Church. New messages every week.



YOUTUBE

@citylightalabama



PODCAST

Apple Podcasts & Spotify



INSTAGRAM

@citylightalabama



FACEBOOK

/citylightalabama

JOIN US SUNDAYS AT 10:30AM

907 Shelton Beach Rd, Saraland, AL · citylightalabama.com

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.esv.org