

Thank you, Andrew, and thank you, worship team. Oh, it was so great to lift our voices in praise together today. That was amazing. Thank you. I'm so thankful for all of you being here today.

It's really a blessing to be here with you today.

Just a quick prayer as I settle my own mind. Dear Father, I pray that by your spirit your wisdom would guide us and guard our hearts and minds today. Amen.

The topic I chose for today is very similar to a chapel message I gave back in 2021, and since most of you were not here then, I thought it might be good to revisit it. There have been some significant changes since 2021, and some things bear repeating. And some things about this topic need to be addressed since so much has happened in these last 5 years. The title of this message is simply "Life." What is life? Specifically, human life. Are our lives valuable?

Are all lives equally valuable? If not, How should we decide which lives are more valuable than others? Do we ever have to decide between two lives? What does God say about the value of a life? And how does the Old Testament inform our views on life?

Does that change in the New Testament? If it does— I don't know, let's see— how do things, these kinds of things and these questions translate into real everyday life in our culture.

We as human beings have been wrestling with questions about life since God first breathed life into Adam. Genesis 2:7 says, "Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." Okay, so let's start right there in the beginning. So man is alive. He is a complex organism with a circulatory system, a nervous system, and a brain. Such incredible anatomy we have.

Millions of microscopic cells form this living being. But then the text takes life to the next level so quickly then in verse 9. Let's read verse 9. The Tree of Life, it was in the midst of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. And as we read the text a little further, we realize that life is now complicated with good and evil, right and wrong, motivations, consciousness, beliefs.

We are not just an organism of material cells. We have a soul, an inner being, a mysterious essence of life that is unique to human beings. It's not just simply that we have emotions. Anyone who has ever had a pet knows that animals have emotions. So what is it?

What is this life that humans have? And at what point do we have it? Does this life begin when we have all of the completed genetic code in place, otherwise known as conception? Or, as some propose, does this life begin when we draw our first breath? Or somewhere in between?

How do we know?

We, as human beings, have this essence that is life because We were created by God in his image. No other being in creation has this essence of life. Going back in Genesis to chapter 1, verses 26 to 27, it says— where God says, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. And God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him, male and female, he created them."

We as humans are set apart from all of other God's created beings. We are the image bearers of God. This special designation is very important to Christians as we try to understand issues of life in our culture. The Bible supports this special designation all throughout Scripture. Let's read David's words again from Psalm 139 that Andrew has already read.

Such powerful words. David writes, "For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am 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 was none of them. The most impactful part —part of this verse for a Bible-believing Christian is that last verse. God knows us as ourselves, our true selves, before we are even conceived.

He knows us before our days were formed. Life, that essence that God has given to each of us, exists before our material body is formed, before The DNA is tangled together. As Christians, this is probably the most clear guidance as we consider the issue of life today in our culture. Unfortunately, some Christians have lost sight of this truth. And while this idea of the essence of life as image bearers is important to us as believers, we are often faced with the challenge of communicating the ideas around the issues of life with non-believers.

What arguments can— that defend this essence of life, the worth and dignity of every human life, can be made to people who don't believe in God or the authority of Scripture? We will explore some of those ideas in a few minutes, but first, I'd like to share a personal story related to why this issue is so important to me. As Andrew has told you, in my career, I've been a labor and delivery nurse for 24 years, and then following that, I worked 14 years in a prenatal care clinic. I was always caring for women during some part of their pregnancy. And I also have been a volunteer at Choice One.

Choice One, as some of you might know, is a local crisis pregnancy center where women and girls who have become pregnant can receive support and love and care. And in the past, I actually did early ultrasounds during counseling sessions. It is a powerful tool to help a woman to see her unborn baby, to know that she has life in her, not just a glob of cells but a functioning, active beautiful little baby. I had a client at Choice One a few years ago who came to see me for an ultrasound. She had already made up her mind she was going to have an abortion, but she really just wanted to see how far along she was, and the ultrasounds at Choice One are free.

She could see with her own eyes that life inside of her, and we talked for a while, and then with tears streaming down her face, As she lay there on that bed, she made her decision to not have an abortion. Well, the staff at the center sprang into action. They surrounded her with love and support. We gave her diapers and clothing. We threw her a baby shower.

And we were helping her with resources that she needed to begin parenting. She was afraid. But I tell you, She was happy. After that baby was born, she came back to the center one evening for diapers, and I just happened to be there. She was so happy to see me.

She placed her baby into my arms. She wrapped her arms around the both of us, and she thanked me for helping her to see her beautiful baby in that ultrasound.

So let's talk about abortion.

If I were to ask you to name a Supreme Court case, any case off the top of your head, I bet many of you might come up with Roe v. Wade, right? Discussions around this landmark case are alive and well in our culture. The Roe v. Wade decision was handed down on January 22, 1973, And the United States has been unsettled with this decision ever since it happened 53 years ago. Now, because of recent events, some of you may be able to come up with the name of another more recent case known as the Dobbs decision.

And this one was handed down from the Supreme Court on June of 2022. It's just not that long ago. If you're a freshman now, then you would have been likely finishing your freshman year in high school when that happened, and in truth, and understandably so, you may not have been paying attention to that in high school. Do you know what these two decisions mean to our country? I'm quoting from the Students for Life website: On January 22nd, 1973, 7 men on the U.S. Supreme Court struck down more than 30 state bans on abortion and legalized abortion through all 9 months of pregnancy for whatever reason across the United States.

Regardless of whether you know their names, these historic decisions, Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton, have affected your life. Thankfully, nearly— after nearly 50 years, the Supreme Court reversed the Roe

and Doe decisions on June 24th, 2022, and returned abortion regulation to the states. Prior to their reversal, these laws were akin to abortion mandates that prevented states from banning pre-viability abortions. This is important to understand. *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* simply returned the legal decision, uh, the legal decision regarding abortion to each state.

States now have the freedom to pass laws that the people in their states support. And Indiana was the first state to pass a pro-life law after *Dobbs*. Let's look at this map. So this is a map from the Family Research Council, and I apologize, the print is a little slow, but I'm going to go over it with you. So 13 states have enacted laws already now, just these last couple of years, protecting life from conception.

From conception! 13 states. And you can see those in the dark green. 4 others have protected life from when the baby's heartbeat is detected, as you can see by that medium shade of green. 6 other states have laws protecting life based on a particular gestational age, and those are in light green.

Pennsylvania happens to fall in that category. Several states are in the process of passing laws but are being held up in court, and you can see those with the orange lines through them. The red states show where the unborn are not protected at all. All of this has dramatically changed and is still changing since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* by the *Dobbs* decision.

Do you know your own views? Can you make a coherent argument for your views?

I'd like to divide this audience today into 3 groups. I know there's probably more categories than that, but for argument's sake, I'm going to divide you all up into 3 categories. Where do you stand on the issues of life? How important is it to you? And what voting decisions will you make based on these views.

The first group I'd like to address is characterized by apathy. Does this characterize you? When you hear anyone expressing pro-life or pro-abortion views, do you just go cold and close your heart and mind even to thinking about it? And there are a variety of reasons why this might describe you. Maybe you're just tired of all the battles and the rhetoric in the political arena.

Or maybe you feel baffled by the various arguments out there, and in any event, you feel apathetic and disinterested.

Then there may be some of you who have experiences or maybe relationships with friends and family that have challenged your views. Maybe you were brought up to believe in the sanctity of human life, and you went with your family to church and they taught you that the pro-life position is the Christian, biblical, and godly view to hold, but in recent years you've questioned this belief and you now think that there might be room for a woman to decide to have an abortion. So you're on the fence.

The third kind of listener today is the one that I most closely rec— identify with. You definitely believe in the sanctity of human life. It's a firm belief. But you're not sure what to do with that belief. You're not sure how to talk about it with your friends and family, especially those who don't share your convictions.

And you feel a little tongue-tied if you were faced with someone who disagreed with you, and you struggle to articulate your views, maybe even in the hopes of trying to persuade someone to think and believe as you do. So today, my first goal is to engender enthusiasm for this subject. Because this is obviously chosen for my first type of listener, for those that are disinterested and apathetic. When it comes to abortion, I often think that apathy is driven by a lack of knowledge, or possibly discomfort with the fire in the political arena. And we feel the heat.

And we wanna back away. It's natural. So let's be clear what an abortion is. You also need to know what a trimester is. Pregnancy is divided into 3 trimesters.

The first trimester is weeks 1 through 12. Second trimester is 13 to 26 weeks. And the third trimester

is 27 to 40 weeks. Do you know what an abortion actually is?

During the early part of the first trimester, most abortions are performed by giving the mother a medication that causes her to expel the baby. And this medication has gotten a lot of airtime in the news in the last several years, especially since the Dobbs case. Later in the first trimester, an aspirator is used to suck out parts of the baby in a procedure known as dilation and curettage. A metal instrument dilates the cervix, and a sharp blade scrapes the wall of the uterus to remove the baby and aspirate the baby's parts. As per the Charlotte Lozier Institute, starting from about 13 to 14 weeks of gestation, the abortionist may administer an injection, such as potassium chloride or digoxin, into the amniotic sac, heart, or head of the unborn child to ensure that he or she is dead upon delivery, although this is practiced inconsistently among abortion centers.

On the day of the procedure, if further cervical dilation is needed, this is performed with mechanical dilators just prior to the procedure. Uterine evacuation is then performed. For younger babies, this can be primarily accomplished using suction to remove as much of the tissue and soft body parts as possible, followed by using forceps for removal of larger and harder body parts. For older and larger babies, dismemberment using forceps is used, grasping and pulling off limbs for removal. The brain may be removed by suction.

And the skull crushed for removal. I'm sorry for this brutal description. The brutality of dismemberment abortion has been acknowledged even by abortionists, with one early adopter of D&E, dilation and evacuation, noting that the procedure took a toll on his staff, resulting in stress, nightmares, and relationship problems.

Now, I want to point out a few notable features in fetal development, so that you can line up these things with the times in the pregnancy when abortion is happening. By the time a woman misses her first period, the baby is considered to be in the 4th week of gestation. The nervous system has already started to develop. At 6 weeks, the mouth and nose and ears are formed, and intestines and brains are developing, and the heart and circulatory system is formed. That means by the time many women find out that they are pregnant, the heart is already beating.

By 10 weeks, little details develop, like fingers, toenails, earlobes.

At 13 weeks, the baby has a fingerprint, and most believe that the baby can already feel pain. The vast majority of abortions happen in these early weeks. Let's be clear, they are distinctly human from conception. At 14 weeks, the kidneys are actually working, and the baby can suck his or her thumb.

At 16 weeks, the senses are intact. They can sense light. At 19 weeks, there's evidence of hearing. Between 22 and 24 weeks is considered the age of viability. They can survive outside of the mother's womb with medical help.

When do you believe when that life actually begins. I believe it matters. Is it at conception? Or when the heartbeat is detectable? Or at the age of viability?

What kind of viability? With medical help or not? We need to think through these questions. And to do that, let's go to the next section. I think this section is especially helpful to you fence-sitters and you tongue-tied ones.

My second goal today is to equip you for the exchange of ideas. We need to learn to talk about this. Pro-abortion advocates would have you believe that during pregnancy, it is the woman's right to choose what happens to her body. They assert that the baby has no rights and that the human right to life doesn't exist until the mother decides that it does. They don't want to talk about this new human as having any rights outside of the mother's choice.

Let me ask you: How can it be right to kill her baby— how can her— I'm sorry— how can her right to kill her baby change from one day to the next? Along those lines, if we believe that science is correct, that the baby is truly a human being? Do we really want to say that a baby does not have the right to life

just because of level of development or degree of dependence? Let's look at those two things: level of development and degree of dependence. We couldn't argue that level of development decides human worth.

Would you say that a 2-year-old could be killed because she's not fully developed? Where then, along the continuum of development, should human rights begin? What arbitrary point can be assigned? Well, let's consider another, uh, argument related to the degree of dependence. This is one that pro-abortionists use a lot.

How can you say that preborn child— the preborn child doesn't have human rights? Because in the womb, the baby is just simply dependent on the mother for life. It's dependent. The degree of dependence cannot help us decide the value of life or if it is indeed a human. Think for a minute, if an adult is in an accident and in a coma for 2 weeks, entirely dependent on nurses and physicians for every part of life, could we claim the right to kill that person just because of dependence?

All newborn babies are entirely dependent on an adult for survival. So, both level of development and degree of dependence cannot help us decide if a being is human, and if it has the right to live and not be killed. This new little being is a distinct being, uniquely human, and uniquely different from all other human beings. From the moment of fertilization, when the egg and sperm come together, a zygote is formed. There is no egg and sperm left.

It is uniquely human. No other member of the animal kingdom can form from this particular zygote. And in fact, all of the genetic code, every piece of DNA code needed to form a complete human being is in this zygote from the moment of fertilization. Nothing external is ever added in the form of DNA or code for development. From the— this moment on, We are just looking at stages of development.

Think of that for a minute. This little human is complete, and from this point on develops as a self-directed organism, a human being. Its size does not determine its nature as a human. The science of embryology and fetal development is irrefutable. But science doesn't tell us how to decide right and wrong.

Let me say that again: science does not tell us how to decide right and wrong. In his book "The Case for Life" by Scott Klusendorf— and I recommend you read this— he writes, "Is it wrong to torture toddlers for fun after beating your wife? Science can't help you with that decision." Nor can it tell us why the unborn human, or any human for that matter, has value and a right to life. He goes on to say, secular critics deny this value and right to life, insisting that mere membership in the human species is not enough to confirm a right to life. Rather, they say, humans come to be at one point but only become intrinsically valuable after they acquire some immediately exercisable capacity, usually self-awareness or sentience, that is lacking in embryos and fetuses.

Thus, embryos and fetuses do not have the right to life that we are obliged to respect. Is this right? Is this possibly right? How are we thinking like this? If your right to life is based on your functional capacities rather than your nature, it's difficult to say why it would be wrong to kill you while you're comatose or still in infancy.

In short, humans are equal in nature, not function.

We see that science unequivocally defends the view that hu— the human being begins at conception. There is no chance for a dog a turtle, a chimpanzee, to accidentally form. It is, at its core, a human being every time. It is in nature a human. And we all agree that murder is wrong.

We can defend that one theologically from the Bible, as well as culturally. It is the law of our land. Murder is defined as the premeditated killing of one human being by another. However, it's true that even in our judicial system, we find inconsistencies. For example, in 2004, Scott Peterson— some of you may have heard about this case, but it's a long time ago, so I'm going to remind you.

Scott Peterson killed his pregnant wife, who was 8 months pregnant at the time. He was tried and

convicted for double homicide. And this was in a state where late-term abortions were legal. How could a state that allows for full-term abortions say that Peterson was guilty of murder of an unborn baby?

So then, does this become an argument for wantedness? What do I mean by wantedness? Laci, Scott Peterson's wife, wanted her baby. A different person deciding to get a late-term abortion decides that her baby's not wanted. How can the criteria of wantedness be what decides the difference between murder and legal abortion?

Are we really supposed to believe that just because a baby is not wanted, we have the right to kill it? One troubling thing that is happening is that many defenders of the pro-choice, pro-abortion position have begun to erode the traditionally Christian viewpoint for pro-life. If you've noticed, these last few arguments are more philosophical in nature and not necessarily theological. So don't get me wrong, as Christians, I want you to have a firm biblical view based on scriptures like the ones that we read earlier. I want you to believe that we are made in the image of God and see the truth of David's words that we were known by God from even before we were conceived.

But in a secular world, theological arguments will fall on deaf ears. An even more disturbing trend is that Christians are finding a way around the Bible and are developing, quote, "moral" arguments for abortion. They use language like, "Abortion protects life," and, uh, "Abortion can be a mothering decision, sparing the baby from the suffering in this world. If you do a Google search on any given day for "what does the Bible say about abortion?" Let me warn you, the first couple of sites will probably be instructing Christians on a biblical argument for abortion. The Bible doesn't actually use the word abortion.

Christians generally understand the Bible as a whole to hold— uphold the sanctity of human life. Texts like the creation passage and Psalm 139 that we've read today give us a good foundation for a pro-life viewpoint. Jeremiah 1:5-6 says, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I consecrated you." God knows the ones that will actually become a person, According to Jeremiah 1, he plans it even before conception. But you ask, what about the life of the mother?

Why all this focus on the baby without acknowledging the mother's life or health? And the answer to that question is clear in God's word. Jesus tells us in John 15:12 to love one another as I have loved you. Love and support is the most life-giving way for both the mother and the baby. So at this point, I would like to encourage engagement.

Start to educate yourselves. And I have a few examples for you. There are many more, but for starters, you could get involved in Cairn's pro-life club. I saw there were two ads on the feed in the beginning. I love it.

Start practicing with each other how to articulate your views. Or you can follow online the Students for Life that's led by Kristen Hawkins. There she focuses on your age group, college students, and her podcast is called Explicitly Pro-Life. She's a powerhouse, let me tell you. Americans United for Life, Sidewalk Advocates for Life.

There is endless things that we could do to start getting involved. I encourage you to participate in your state's March for Life. Or the national one in Washington, D.C. That's every year. Pennsylvania's March for Life is in Harrisburg, and it's scheduled for this year, September 21st. And the 2027 March for Life in Washington, D.C., next January, is on January 22nd.

Pro-life messaging is growing increasingly more loving and compassionate. Most people who hold the value of life, to the value of life, are realizing that we can't value the life of the preborn child over the life of the mother. So we want to come alongside of her and love her. Offering support and care for a woman in an unplanned pregnancy can make all the difference. So if you want to work outside of an abortion facility, or you can sign up for the Sidewalk Advocates for Life, or you can follow Charlotte Lozier Institute, or Susan B. Anthony's Pro-Life for America, or People Concerned for the Unborn Child or liveaction.org.

You see, there's so many things you could tap into. Maybe start by reading Clark Forsythe's book called "Abuse of Discretion" and learn what happened when they made that ruling of Roe v. Wade in the first place. Or read Scott Klusendorf's book "The Case for Life," watch the movie "Unplanned," watch the documentary "The Matter of Life," Or volunteer at Choice One or other crisis pregnancy centers. Or, I think this might be the biggest one, someday you might find yourselves in the public square, making an argument in the courts, or serving in state or national legislature. The most defenseless human beings need all of us participating in the cause to win hearts and minds before it even gets to the legislatures and courtrooms.

This is really only the tip of the iceberg today on discussions in life, but even after this short introduction, it should be evident that the question of what is life is crucial on a personal, theological, and cultural level. I encourage you, all of you, the apathetic, the fence-sitters, and the tongue-tied to become enthusiastic about life. Equip yourselves for the exchange of ideas and engage in the fight. Let's pray. Dear Lord, I just thank you for these beautiful scriptures that have given us a window into your value of human life, and I thank you for valuing the life of each and every one of us here today.

And I pray, Lord, that you would impact them in their own lives so that they can learn more about this issue and learn how to honor you in their decision-making going forward. Bless these students as they study, Lord. Give them, um, wisdom and insight into your word as they apply it to their lives. And I just praise you and thank you for them today. In Jesus' name, amen.