

Session #1: Making a Case for Life on Hostile Turf

The three most important words for the pro-life apologist:



1. Syllogism
2. Syllogism
3. Syllogism

Define your terms or get clobbered! Critics will take you off-message! They'll talk about choice, privacy, trusting women, and personal freedom, all of which are entirely beside the point. If you don't frame the debate, you lose.

Pro-life syllogism:

P1: It is wrong to intentionally kill an innocent human being.

P2: Abortion intentionally kills an innocent human being.

C: Therefore, abortion is wrong.

Avoid distractions! Stay focused on your syllogism to avoid distractions. There is no such thing as a "woman's perspective" on abortion that trumps all rational inquiries into the subject. Indeed, feminists, let alone women in general, have no single perspective on the issue. Gender is irrelevant. It is arguments that must be advanced and defended.

Thesis: You can make a persuasive case for life if you focus on three key questions:

#1: What is the unborn?

At the street level, many justifications for abortion assume the unborn are not human. Trot out your toddler to clarify things.

Ask if any of the reasons given for elective abortion justify killing a toddler. If not, the argument assumes the unborn are not human. Notice you are not yet making a case for the humanity of the unborn. (You'll do that later.) Rather, you are simply clarifying the issue.

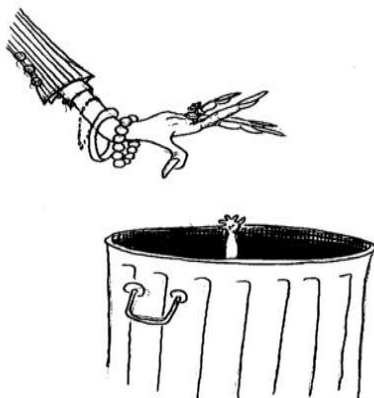


- *Anti-choicers don't trust women*—If parents want to rough up their toddler in the privacy of the bedroom, should we trust them to make their own personal choices?
- *Anti-choicers want to force poor women* to bring another child into this world.—When human beings get expensive, may we kill them?
- *Abortion is needed to prevent child abuse*.—Can we kill 2-year olds to prevent the abuse of 5-year olds?
- *Abortion allows women freedom to pursue careers*.—Can we kill toddlers who interfere with a mother's education or career?
- *Laws against abortion impose morality*.—Would you say the same thing about laws against killing toddlers?
- *Abortion is needed to prevent disabled children*.—Since when are damaged humans non-humans? Is it okay to kill handicapped two-year olds?

Scientific support: The unborn are distinct, living, and whole human beings. True, they have yet to grow and mature, but they are whole human beings nonetheless.

Leading embryology textbooks affirm this.¹

- *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* Keith L. Moore & T.V.N. Persaud write: “A zygote is the beginning of a new human being. Human development begins at fertilization, the process during which a male gamete or sperm...unites with a female gamete or oocyte...to form a single cell called a zygote. This highly specialized, totipotent cell marks the beginning of each of us as a unique individual.”
- T.W. Sadler's *Langman's Embryology* states: “The development of a human begins with fertilization, a process by which the spermatozoon from the male and the oocyte from the female unite to give rise to a new organism, the zygote.”
- Embryologists Ronan O'Rahilly and Fabiola Müller write, “Although life is a continuous process, fertilization is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is thereby formed.”



That abortion intentionally kills a living human being is conceded by many who support the practice:

- **Dr. Warren Hern**, author of *Abortion Practice*—to a Planned Parenthood conference: “We have reached a point in this particular technology [D&E abortion] where there is no possibility of denying an act of destruction. It is before one's eyes. The sensations of dismemberment flow through the forceps like an electric current.”²

¹ See T.W. Sadler, *Langman's Embryology*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1993) p. 3; Keith L. Moore, *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company, 1998), pp. 2-18. O'Rahilly, Ronand and Muller, Pabiola, *Human Embryology and Teratology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley-Liss, 1996) pp. 8, 29.

² Paper presented at the 1978 meeting of the Association of Planned Parenthood Physicians, October 26. <http://www.drhern.com/pdfs/staffrx.pdf>

- **Ronald Dworkin**, in *Life's Dominion*—Abortion deliberately kills a developing embryo and is a choice for death.³
- **Faye Wattleton**, former President of Planned Parenthood—“I think we have deluded ourselves into believing that people don't know that abortion is killing. So any pretense that abortion is not killing is a signal of our ambivalence, a signal that we cannot say yes, it kills a fetus.”⁴
- **Naomi Wolf**, a prominent feminist author and abortion supporter, in *The New Republic*—“Clinging to a rhetoric about abortion in which there is no life and no death, we entangle our beliefs in a series of self-delusions, fibs and evasions. And we risk becoming precisely what our critics charge us with being: callous, selfish and casually destructive men and women who share a cheapened view of human life...we need to contextualize the fight to defend abortion rights within a moral framework that admits that the death of a fetus is a real death.”⁵
- **Camille Paglia**, feminist—“Hence I have always frankly admitted that abortion is murder, the extermination of the powerless by the powerful. Liberals for the most part have shrunk from facing the ethical consequences of their embrace of abortion, which results in the annihilation of concrete individuals and not just clumps of insensate tissue.”⁶
- **Anthony Kennedy**, Supreme Court Justice—“The fetus, in many cases, dies just as a human adult or child would: it bleeds to death as it is torn from limb to limb....The fetus can be alive at the beginning of the dismemberment process and can survive for a time while its limbs are being torn off....Dr. [Leroy] Carhart [the abortionist who challenged Nebraska's partial“birth ban] has observed fetal heartbeat . . . with “extensive parts of the fetus removed,”...and testified that mere dismemberment of a limb does not always cause death because he knows of a physician who removed the arm of a fetus only to have the fetus go on to be born “as a living child with one arm.” At the conclusion of a D&E abortion...the abortionist is left with “a tray full of pieces.”⁷

#2: What makes humans valuable?

Key philosophical question: Does each human being have an equal right to life or do only some have it in virtue of some characteristic which may come and go within the course of their lifetimes? Pro-life advocates contend there is no morally significant difference between the embryo you once were and the adult you are today that would justify killing you at that earlier stage of development. Differences of size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency are not good reasons for saying you had no right to life then but you do now.

³ Ronald Dworkin, *Life's Dominion: An Argument About Abortion, Euthanasia, and Individual Freedom* (New York: Vintage, 1994) p. 3.

⁴ Faye Wattleton, “Speaking Frankly,” *Ms.*, May / June 1997, Volume VII, Number 6, 67.

⁵ Naomi Wolf, “Our Bodies, Our Souls,” *The New Republic*, October 16, 1995, 26

⁶ Camille Paglia, “Fresh Blood for the Vampire,” *Salon*, September 10, 2008.

⁷ *Stenberg v. Carhart*, 2000.

Stephen Schwarz suggests the acronym **SLED** as a helpful reminder of these non-essential differences:

Size: You were smaller as an embryo, but since when does your body size determine value?

Level of Development: True, you were less developed as an embryo, but six-month olds are less developed than teenagers physically and mentally, but we don't think we can kill them.

Environment: Where you are has no bearing on what you are. How does a journey of eight inches down the birth canal change the essential nature of the unborn from a being we can kill to one we can't?

Degree of Dependency: Sure, you depended on your mother for survival, but since when does dependence on another human mean we can kill you? (Consider conjoined twins, for example.)

In short, humans are equal by nature not function. Although they differ immensely in their respective degrees of development, they are nonetheless equal because they share a common human nature.

#3: What's the point?

The point is to love our unborn neighbor even though it's costly. We start by succinctly defending him:

1-Minute Soundbite: "I am pro-life because the science of embryology establishes that from the earliest stages of development, you were a distinct, living, and whole human being. You weren't part of another human being like skin cells on the back of my hand; you were already a whole living member of the human family even though you had yet to mature. And there is no essential difference between the embryo you once were and the adult you are today that justifies killing you at that earlier stage of development. Differences of size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency are not good reasons for saying you could be killed then but not now."

Get Smart! Up Your Pro-Life Game in Three Easy Steps:

- **Step #1—Pray!** Colson Center's "21 Days for Life" prayer and apologetics guide w/ short readings <http://www.colsoncenter.org/?s=21+days+for+life>
- **Step #2—Watch!** Debate between Scott Klusendorf and Nadine Strossen (former President of the ACLU) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmVYD1Nn0_o

Suggested Reading:

1. Peter Kreeft, *The Unaborted Socrates: A Dramatic Debate on the Issues Surrounding Abortion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983)
2. Scott Klusendorf, *The Case for Life: Equipping Christians to Engage the Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009)
3. Christopher Kaczor, *The Ethics of Abortion: Women's Rights, Human Life, and the Question of Justice*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015)

Session #2: Five Bad Ways People Argue About Abortion



Review of pro-life syllogism:

P1: It is wrong to intentionally kill innocent human beings.

P2: Abortion intentionally kills innocent human beings.

Therefore,

C: Abortion is morally wrong.

Key question: Do any of my opponent's objections refute that syllogism? If not, your opponent is changing the subject. Practice narrating the debate—that is, remind your critic of the case you presented and how his responses fail to refute your case or establish his (assuming he has one). Look for five bad ways people argue:

1. They assume rather than argue.

Example—back alley argument: “The law can’t stop all abortions. Women will be forced to get dangerous illegal ones.”

- Philosophical reply: Argument begs the question by assuming the unborn are not human. Otherwise, the argument is saying that because some people die attempting to kill others, the state should make it safe and legal to do so. But why should the law be faulted for making it more risky for one human to intentionally take the life of another completely innocent one?
- While all deaths from abortion are a tragedy, it’s false that 5,000 to 10,000 women died annually from illegal abortion. Experts from the other side affirm this (Teitze, Nathanson, Callahan, Calderone).
- The claim that laws can’t stop all abortions is silly. Laws against rape don’t stop all rape but that hardly justifies legalizing the practice.
- Women are not forced to have illegal abortions. They choose to have them. To say otherwise demeans women.

2. They attack rather than argue.

Example: “Men can’t get pregnant. Only women should decide the issue.”

- Arguments don’t have gender; people do. Pro-life women use the same pro-life arguments.
- If men can’t speak on abortion, *Roe v. Wade* should be reversed because nine men decided it.
- Leads to bizarre reasoning: Should only generals decide the morality of war?

Example: “Pro-life advocates have no right to oppose abortion unless they adopt unwanted children.”

- How does my alleged unwillingness to adopt a child justify an abortionist killing him?
- Argument begs the question: It assumes the unborn are not human. For example, the homeless are unwanted. Can we intentionally kill them? Can I kill unwanted toddlers?
- Plenty of people want to adopt unwanted kids but can't due to bureaucratic red tape.

Example: “Pro-life advocates are inconsistent for opposing abortion but not the death penalty.”

- Suppose we are inconsistent. How does this refute our pro-life syllogism? How does it refute the humanity of the unborn? Could the unborn still be human even if we're inconsistent?
- The argument attacks a strawman. The pro-life view is not that it is always wrong to kill, only that it's wrong to intentionally kill an innocent human being.
- The consistency sword cuts both ways. The abortion-choice advocate is against capital punishment but supports abortion. Doesn't that make him inconsistent?

Example: “Pro-life advocates are too narrow and should broaden their focus to oppose war, poverty, economic inequality, care for the environment, AIDS, etc.”

- Suppose we are too narrow. How does that justify intentionally killing an innocent human being? Could abortion still be wrong even if pro-lifers fail to fulfill all their obligations?
- Of course abortion isn't the only issue, any more than slavery was the only issue in 1860 or killing Jews the only issue in 1940. But both were the *dominant* issues of their day. While many issues are important, they don't all carry the same moral weight.
- How does it follow that because I oppose the intentional destruction of an innocent human being, I must take personal responsibility for curing all of society's ills? Is the American Cancer Society “too narrow” because it focuses on one particular disease and not others? To be effective, pro-life advocates should focus on one big moral issue, not many.
- War is a *contingent* evil that must be prudently considered. Abortion, however, is an *absolute* evil and laws permitting it are scandalous. Critics of the pro-life view are asking us to overlook an absolute evil in favor of preventing contingent ones. Meanwhile, the U.S. government can't stop economic inequity in Thailand, but it can ban the killing of unborn humans within its own borders, which is why pro-life Christians have political duties.

Example: “Pro-life advocates should work to reduce abortion by focusing on its underlying causes rather than working politically to make it illegal.”

- Why care about “reducing” abortion if it doesn’t intentionally kill an innocent human being?
- Imagine someone saying that underlying cause of spousal abuse is psychological, so rather than banning wife abuse, the state will provide free counseling for men.
- There are underlying causes for rape, murder, and theft, but that hardly means it’s misguided to pass laws against them.

3. They assert rather than argue.

Example—“Women have a right to choose.”

- Argument or assertion? Choose what? And where does right to choose come from?
- To reverse the burden of proof, ask, “Why would you believe a thing like that?”

4. They confuse functioning as a human with being a human.

Example—“Embryo is not self-aware and has no immediately exercisable desires.”

- Why does self-awareness or having desires matter? Why are they value-giving in first place?
- The objection proves too much; it disqualifies newborns who lack self-awareness or desires.
- Results in savage inequality: Self awareness comes in degrees. So does having desires. No one in this room shares those things equally. Thus, if self-awareness or having desires grounds our value as persons, those with more of those characteristics have more value (and, hence, a greater right to life) than those with less. You can throw human equality on the ash heap of history! Far better to argue that although humans differ immensely in terms of characteristics, they share a common human nature.
- Frank Beckwith: Suppose a scientist surgically alters the brain of a developing fetus so he never desires anything. Then, at age 5, the child is killed so his body parts can be used to treat illness in others. If the child had no desires when he was killed, was he nevertheless wronged?

5. They hide behind the hard cases.

For the inquirer, ask: “How should a civil society treat innocent human beings who remind us of a painful event? For the crusader, ask: “I’ll grant for the sake of argument we allow abortion for rape. Will you join me in opposing all other abortions?” He won’t. He wants all abortion legal. (In other words, call his bluff.) Another tactic: Ask, “In pregnancies that result from rape, how many humans are involved, two or three? If they say three, ask how we should treat each. Should we execute the guilty rapist? (Most say no.) Execute his mother? Execute the child for the sin of his father?”

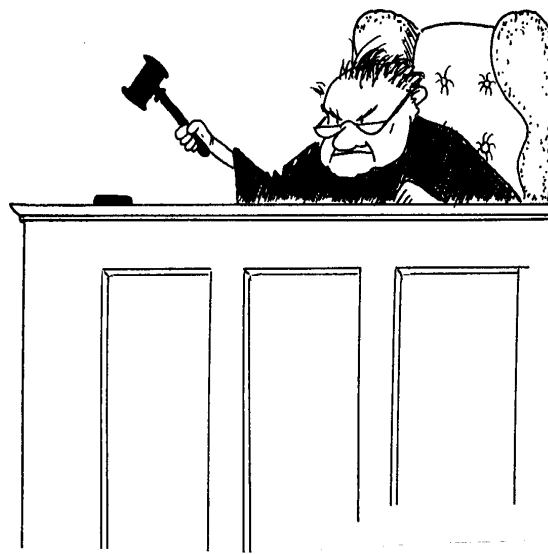
Session #3: The Case Against Relativism

- I. Intro: Tell me the difference between these two types of claims:
- A. “Chocolate ice-cream is better than vanilla.” (subjective, changes w/tastes)
 - B. “It’s wrong to torture babies for fun.” (objective, true in spite of tastes)
- II. Topic: “Can Anyone Be Right About Anything: The Case Against Relativism”
- III. Significant, because many people today don’t know the difference between the two types of claims I mentioned above. Indeed, at street level, relativism is the single biggest challenge to a Christian worldview.

- A. Relativism defined: What’s right and wrong is up to us to decide either individually or as a society. There are no objective standards of morality that we are beholden to independent of personal tastes or culture.

Example #1: Bumper Sticker: “Don’t like Abortion? Don’t have one!”

1. Notice the key word: “like.”
2. That single word entirely changes the kind of claim the pro-lifer makes. Remember! Pro-lifers don’t oppose abortion because they find it distasteful. They oppose it because it intentionally kills an innocent human being. True, the pro-lifer may be wrong about that, but we shouldn’t confuse the type of claim the pro-lifer makes.



Example #2: Nick Cannon—“Can I Live?”

1. Here’s the line that got Nick in trouble: “Mom, I hope you’ll make the right decision and not go through with the knife incision.”
2. Some people were angry—not because Nick was wrong in his description of abortion (no one challenged that), but because he claimed to be right. They said things like “Who are you to judge?” and “You shouldn’t force your personal views on others.”

Example #3: University of Maryland student Greg Dickinson in the school paper:

After seeing the gruesome display on Hornbake Mall, I was once again reminded why I am pro-choice. Abortion is a horrible act that should only be reserved for when the health of the mother is in danger or when the circumstances of impregnation were brutal. However, to me this argument is brushed aside. As a gay student who grew up in a conservative area, I know firsthand what it is like to be

judged, harassed, humiliated and denied the basic rights to marry the one I love and have a family. These are rights that I feel are universal, but conservative moralists have denied me of them. This is why I have developed an unwavering, uncompromising belief that personal morals must be kept personal, because no matter how strong my personal beliefs are, I would never have my moral convictions pressed upon another person. Our entire society is built on choice, and it is this freedom of choice that must be respected and preserved.

Example #4: The re-definition of “tolerance”

1. Classic view of tolerance: I think your idea is mistaken, but I will tolerate you expressing your view and making your case. The classical view tolerates persons as being equally valuable, but rejects the claim that all ideas are so. Indeed, the very concept of tolerance presupposes I think you are wrong. Otherwise, I’m not tolerating you. I’m agreeing with you!
2. Current view of tolerance: All ideas are equally valid, especially in religion and ethics. Don’t you dare claim your idea is superior to some one else’s idea, especially in religion and ethics. (Hence, the popular bumper sticker, “Celebrate Diversity.”)

B. Three types of Relativism (as noted by Beckwith, Koukl, Smith):

1. *Society-Does Relativism*: Claim—The absence of consensus means an absence of truth. Yet how does it follow that because people disagree, nobody is right? People once disagreed on slavery—did that mean nobody was correct? Society Does Relativism is descriptive not proscriptive. That is, it only describes what cultures do, not what they *ought* to do. Moreover, if the presence of disagreement means there are no objective truths, the relativists own claim is falsified. After all, non-relativists disagree with relativists!
2. *Society-Says Relativism*: Claim—Each society determines right and wrong for itself. What’s right for one society may not be right for another. Morality is reduced to a social contract and is determined by popular consensus. But if this is true, there can be no such thing as an immoral society or an immoral law. If a particular society chooses to enslave women or practice racial genocide, who are we, as outsiders, to judge? Indeed, the Nazis used this very defense at the Nuremberg Trials, claiming they had merely followed orders within the framework of their own legal system, one that varied from outside nations. Moreover, if society is the final measure of morality, then all of its judgments are moral by definition. Those who oppose those judgments—that is, moral reformers like Martin Luther King Jr. and Ghandi—are therefore immoral. Society cannot be improved, only changed.
3. *I-Say Relativism*: Claim—Morality is up to the individual. I determine right and wrong for myself, meaning no one has a right to judge me. Problem is, if “I Say” relativism is true, there can be no such thing as an immoral individual.

IV. Thesis: Relativism is seriously flawed for at least four reasons:

- A. Flaw #1: Relativism is self-defeating—that is, it can't live with its own rules. Notice the language used by University of Maryland student Greg Dickinson above: He claims morality is personal, but then emphatically states that personal morals must be kept personal and freedom of choice must be respected. Question: Says who? Is that his view? If so, who is he to push his personal views onto pro-lifers who disagree? Remember: The person who says, “you shouldn't judge” just judged you. The person who claims that you shouldn't force your views on others just forced that view on you.
- B. Flaw#2: Relativism can't say why anything is truly wrong, including intolerance. If morals are relative to culture or the individual, there is no ethical difference between Adolph Hitler and Mother Theresa; they just had different preferences: The latter liked to help people while the former liked to kill them. Who are we to judge? But such a view is counterintuitive. We know there's a difference between starving a child and feeding him. Greg Koukl writes: “Relativists find themselves in the unenviable position of having to admit that there is no such thing as evil, justice, fairness, and no obligation of tolerance.”
- C. Flaw #3: Relativists inevitably make moral judgments. If the relativist thinks it's wrong to judge, how can he say that pro-lifers are mistaken in the first place? Isn't he just pushing his socially conditioned view on me? Whenever a relativist says you shouldn't force your views on others, the first words out of your mouth should be, “Why not?” Any answer given will be an example of forcing a view on you.
- D. Flaw #4: Relativism is not neutral. Some relativists, echoing political philosopher John Rawls, hope to convey a more sophisticated claim, namely, that society should confer a large degree of liberty by not legislating on controversial moral issues for which there is no consensus, especially if those issues involve comprehensive moral doctrines based on prior metaphysical commitments. Embryonic stem cell research (ESCR), so the argument goes, is a divisive and controversial issue. Therefore, government should not restrict it. To say government should remain neutral on metaphysical questions is itself a metaphysical claim, a comprehensive moral doctrine about how government should function. It's also controversial: Do we have a consensus that we should not legislate on divisive matters like ESCR? Moreover, slavery and racism were controversial issues. Was it wrong to pass laws against them?

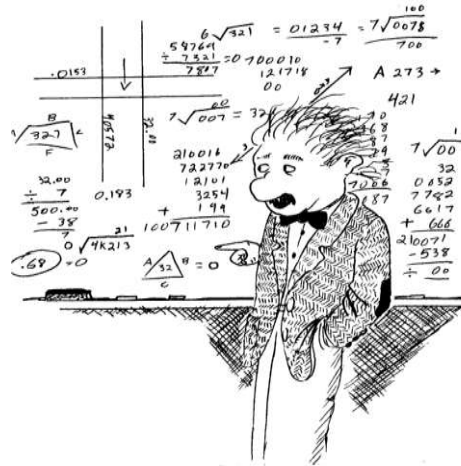
Putting it into practice:

Suppose a university professor tries to paint you as intolerant. During his sociology lecture, he points at you and says, “So, Ms. Davis, what's your view on same-sex marriage?” Before engaging his question head-on, you calmly ask, “I'll answer your question, but first, do you consider yourself a tolerant person or are you going to judge me for my answer. In other words, is it safe to reply or do you only treat charitably those who agree with you?” If he jumps down your throat at that point, he looks like an intolerant fool.

Session 4: Encounter with Dr. Zeke Diversity, Abortion-Advocate:

His thesis: The pro-life position fails the test of reason in five key areas:

- A. Intuitions
- B. Science
- C. Philosophy
- D. Theology
- E. Sociology (the common “good”)



I. Pro-life fails the intuitions test:

- A. Burning fertility clinic test—who to save?
- B. The lethal force (gun) test
- C. The “whole” life test
- D. The real-world test (What if your daughter was raped?)
- E. The consistency test (You oppose abortion but support war/capital punishment)
- F. The legal realities test (Are you willing to prosecute women who abort?)
- G. The perspectives test (A woman’s perspective carries greater weight than a man’s)

II. Pro-life fails the scientific (empirical) test:

- A. Twinning test & miscarriage tests
- B. Cellular test (sperm and egg are alive) & continuous process test
- C. Grieving test

III. Pro-life fails the philosophic test:

- A. Human being/personhood test
- B. Desires, sentience, consciousness, and self-awareness over time tests
- C. Viability test
- D. Bodily rights test

IV. Pro-life fails the theological test:

- A. Silence of scripture test & Exodus 23 test
- B. Imago Dei test (as noted by biblical scholar Paul D. Simmons)
- C. Religious tolerance test

V. Pro-life fails the common good (sociological) test:

- A. Abortion rights woven into fabric of society, harmful to reverse
- B. Abortion reduces crime and child abuse

Summary: Taken together, these critiques present a powerful cumulative case against pro-life.

Session 5: —Tactics: What Dr. Zeke Gets Wrong

1. Note about framing—Dr. Zeke never cited a formal pro-life syllogism and never showed where it went wrong. He just launched into his own presentation. Thus, he did not refute much of anything. The pro-life argument he was obliged to refute goes like this:

P1: It is wrong to intentionally kill an innocent human being.

P2: Abortion intentionally kills an innocent human being.

Therefore,

C: Abortion is wrong

You can refute this syllogism by showing the conclusion does not follow from the premises or that one of more of the premises is false. Dr. Zeke did neither. Thus, your case stands.

2. Note about cumulative cases—if one part is weak, whole case sinks. You cannot string a bunch of leaky buckets together and think you have a case that holds water.
3. Note about intuitions—They are not infallible, though we are justified believing them until proven otherwise.
4. Intuitions—burning research lab flaws:
 - (a) Analogy is wrong headed—it’s about who we should save. Abortion is about who we can intentionally kill.
 - (b) How does it follow that because I save on human over others, the ones left behind are not human?
 - (c) What if the choice was save 1,000 frozen embryos or 100 people in final stages of terminal cancer?
 - (d) The Secret Service will take a bullet for the President but not you. Are you less human than he is?
 - (e) What if the choice was save your own frozen embryos or a stranger?
5. Intuitions—lethal force argument flaws:
 - (a) What follows is that pro-life advocates will work to stop killing, not kill individual abortionists
 - (b) WWII example of Allies dropping incognito behind German lines
6. Intuitions—“whole life” objection
 - (a) How does it follow that because I oppose the intentional killing of an innocent human being, I am responsible to solve other societal ills? Is the American Cancer Society negligent for fighting one disease rather than many?
 - (b) Even if we did everything critics demand, would they oppose abortion? (Never!)
 - (c) Even if we fail to live out our pro-life convictions, doe that refute our syllogism?

7. Intuitions—the “against all killing” inconsistency objection (applied to war/capital punishment):
 - (a) Strawman—Pro-lifers do not argue that all killing is wrong. See our syllogism. We argue it’s wrong to intentionally kill an innocent human being, abortion does that, therefore, it is wrong.
 - (b) Even if we are inconsistent, how does that refute our syllogism or justify intentional killing of unborn?
 - (c) We are not inconsistent: Generals in a just war can foresee the deaths of innocent human beings but not intend them. With abortion, we foresee the death of the unborn AND intend the death of the unborn.
8. Intuitions—daughter rape objection: I would not have her abort. But suppose I did. How does my wrong decision refute the pro-life syllogism?
9. Intuitions—prosecute women objection: Again, could unborn still be human and killing them still be wrong even if pro-lifers fail to apply their principles consistently? (Meeting of the minds / testimony from woman)
10. Science—Twining objection: How does it follow that because an entity may split, it wasn’t a whole living organism prior to the split (flatworm example)? Moreover, if the unborn are not human because a twin can be formed from it and a twin can be formed from one of us, does it follow we are not fully human?
11. Science—Miscarriage: How does it follow that because nature spontaneously triggers a miscarriage that a) the unborn are not human or b) I may intentionally kill them? Earthquakes in the 3rd World do not justify murder.
12. Science—cells alive/life a continuous process: Just because life began ages ago does not mean each of us did not have a distinct beginning, fertilization. Moreover, bodily (somatic cells) do not function as embryos. The latter coordinates its own internal development. Mere clumps of cells do nothing like that. The objection confuses parts with wholes.
13. Science—women don’t grieve miscarriages like they do the deaths of older kids. Question: How do my feelings about something change what it is?
14. Philosophy—biological life vs. personhood: Why should anyone think there can be such a thing as a human that is not a person? (More on this later.)
15. Philosophy—Bodily rights (Thomson) objection: The parallels between being hooked up to a total stranger and a mother being hooked up to her own child do not work. Whole argument collapses.
16. Theology—Bible silent objection: Ask, “Are you saying that whatever the Bible does not condemn it condones? If not, what is your point? I can show the Bible is pro-life even if Scripture is silent (as we will see later).

17. Theology—Shouldn't impose objection: We are not imposing. We are proposing. Dismissing an argument with a label is not a refutation.
18. Sociological objection—crime: We can reduce crime by killing male toddlers in inner cities. Should we do it? Whole objection assumes the unborn are not human.
19. Sociological objection—Can't change 45 years of liberal abortion laws. Did that argument work for racial segregation? Women having the right to vote? Slavery?

What's the Abortion Debate Really About?

Summary: The abortion debate is not about a surgical procedure. It's about a larger worldview question that defies compromise.

The essential pro-life argument:

P1: It is wrong to intentionally kill an innocent human being.

P2: Abortion intentionally kills an innocent human being.

C: Therefore, abortion is wrong.

In every discussion with critics, ask, "Does this objection refute my essential pro-life argument (syllogism) or is it beside the point?"

What's driving the abortion debate?

1. It's not about who loves women and who hates them.
2. It's not about "whole life" vs. "anti-abortion." (They would still hate us and support abortion even if we did all they demand.)
3. It's not about legal neutrality. (The state must take a position.)
4. It's not about moral neutrality. (Both sides answer the same question, What makes humans valuable?)

Rather, it's a serious philosophic debate about who counts as one of us. Either you believe that each and every human being has a right to life or you don't.

Both sides answer the same question, What makes humans valuable in the first place? There are two rival views:

1. Endowment View—Humans are valuable in virtue of what they are, not functions they perform.
2. Performance View—Being human is nothing special. Immediately exercising a given function is.

Idling beneath the performance view is a philosophical anthropology known as body-self dualism. According to body-self dualism, the real you is not your body, which is mere matter in

motion. Rather, the real you is your thoughts, desires, aims, capacity to reason, etc. Before you gain (or once you lose) cognitive function in those areas, your living body exists but you do not.

Personhood theory applies body-self dualism to law and ethics. Personhood theory says being human isn't enough to ground your right to life. Only "persons" have that right—that is, those who achieve a certain level of cognitive functioning. Lose that function and you forfeit your rights.

Personhood theory grounded in body-self dualism is dangerous and deeply problematic:

1. It's totally subjective—Why should anyone think there can be such a thing as a human who is not a person? And who decides which traits matter? Why are those traits value-giving in the first place? Answer: cultural elites have declared it so. Might makes right.
2. It's counterintuitive—If pressed, you must say, "My body existed before I did" or "I was mere matter until my conscious self showed up." It also means your mother has never hugged you, since you cannot hug desires, aims, and a capacity to reason. We only hug bodies! Moreover, sensory acts like seeing involve both the body and the mind.
3. It cannot account for human equality—if an arbitrarily selected trait like self-awareness gives us value and you have more of it than me, you have a greater right to life than me. You can toss human equality out the window.
4. It distorts human "dignity"—confusing intrinsic dignity (which we have in virtue of our humanity) with attributed dignity (which we only gain through accomplishment). The beach bum and the university professor have equal intrinsic dignity but not equal attributed dignity. The right to life is grounded in the former.
5. It provides philosophical foundation for involuntary euthanasia and involuntary organ donation. After all, the rights of actual persons override those of potential persons. Suppose "desires" determines a right to life. To borrow from Frank Beckwith, imagine a surgeon alters the brain of a developing fetus so it never desires anything. Later, at age 5, the child is killed so its body parts can treat disease in others. Was the child wronged given he had no desires, including a desire to go on living?

Application: clarifying the issue with a critic who accuses you of hating women—

I hope you don't believe pro-lifers hate women, but I think you are right about one thing: If the unborn are not members of the human family, I am indeed unfairly imposing my views on women. However, if each and every human being has an equal right to life, and the unborn is one of us, can you see things my way? That is, if you shared my position that abortion intentionally kills an innocent human being, wouldn't you do everything you could to stop it? Wouldn't you want unborn humans protected by law just like everyone else? Of course, I realize you don't share my position, so my point here is really quite modest: The issue that separates us is not that I hate women and you love them. What separates us is that I believe the unborn are members of the human family and you don't. That's the issue I hope we can talk about.

Session 6: Tactics: Handling Objections with Grace and Truth

- I. **Intro:** Ever been on the hot seat? It's not fun getting grilled by a professor or so-called "expert," is it?
- II. **Topic:** Handling objections with grace and truth.
- III. **Significant,** because too many Christians assume the burden of proof when they shouldn't. If I claim there's a pink elephant hanging from the exit sign (some of you just looked), it's not up to you to refute me; it's on me to prove my claim. I made the claim; I bear the burden of proof.
- IV. **Thesis:** When you are under fire, you can get back in the driver's seat by asking 3 key questions. Greg Koukl calls them "Colombo" questions, named after the famous television detective played by Peter Falk. The goal is not dominance, but clarity. You want to convey Christian truth with an artful method. Ask:

What **do you mean** by that?

How **did you come to** that conclusion?

Have you **considered the implications** of your view?

A. Colombo Question #1: "What do you mean by that?"

1. Purpose: to gather information so you can accurately understand your critic's view. This question alone often disarms the challenge.
 - (a) The Bible's been changed many times. (Oh? How so?)
 - (b) You're a religious, political extremist! (What do you mean by "extremist?")
 - (c) Christians involved in politics violate the separation of church and state." (Do you mean that only non-religious people should be allowed to participate in their own government?)
 - (d) Science and faith exclude each other. (What do you mean by "science" and what do you mean by "faith?")
2. Asking "What do you mean by that?" disarms many challenges to pro-life view:
 - (a) Embryonic stem cell research is more promising. (How so? In what ways?)
 - (b) Pro-lifers force their views on others. (Really? How so?)
 - (c) Embryos are just a mass of cells. (What do you mean by that?)
 - (d) I have a right to choose! (Choose what, exactly?)
 - (e) Women have a fundamental right to abortion. (What do you mean by "fundamental?" And where does this "fundamental" right come from?)

B. Colombo Question #2: “How did you come to that conclusion?”

1. Purpose: to reverse the burden of proof and get you out of the hot seat. It forces critics to give reasons for their claims:
 - (a) The Bible is full of fairy tales. (Why would you believe a thing like that?)
 - (b) No one can say which beliefs are right or wrong. (Then why believe you?)
 - (c) No one religion or person sees the whole truth. (How would you know that each sees only a part unless you can see the whole, something you just claimed was impossible?)
2. Asking, “Why do you believe that?” forces abortion-choice advocates to provide evidence (justification) for their claims. It puts you in the driver’s seat:
 - (a) Thousands died from illegal abortion before 1967. (How do you know that?)
 - (b) Fetuses are not self-aware. (Why is self-awareness value-giving?)
 - (c) Pro-lifers just want to prosecute women who have abortions. (What’s wrong with a law that says you can’t kill innocent human beings and if you do, there will be consequences? If the consequences fit the crime, why are they unfair?)

C. Colombo Question #3: “Have you considered the implications of your view?”

1. Purpose: to show that your critic must pay too high a price to hold his view. Examples:
 - (a) Everything is just an illusion. (If so, how could we know it?)
 - (b) You shouldn’t judge! (Have you considered that you just did?)
 - (c) You Christians shouldn’t tell people how to live. (Isn’t telling someone not to do something telling him how to live?)
2. Examples from pro-life discussions:
 - (a) Fetuses have no right to life because they’re not self-aware. (Have you considered that newborns aren’t self-aware either?)
 - (b) Fetuses have no desire to go on living. (Have you considered what follows from that? The capacity to desire anything doesn’t occur until several weeks after birth.)
 - (c) Moral concerns should not get in the way of scientific progress. (Have you considered that you just justified the Tuskegee Experiments?)

D. Putting it all together—Using all three “Colombo” questions to graciously reply to critics:

1. Objection: Laws can’t stop all abortions.

- (a) Do you mean all or most?
 - (b) How do you know most women won't obey the law?
 - (c) Have you considered laws against rape don't stop all rape but they do stop most? Why should it be any different with abortion?
2. Objection: Your abortion pictures are fake!
- (a) Which ones? Given you think my pictures are fake, what do real abortion pictures look like? That is, how do they differ from these?
 - (b) So, if you aren't sure what real abortion pictures look like, how do you know these are fake?
 - (c) Have you considered that if abortion is okay, there pictures shouldn't bother us?
3. Objection: Embryos have no desire to go on living and thus have no right to life.
- (a) When you speak of "desire," do you mean one that I'm consciously aware of?
 - (b) Why must I have a conscious desire for something before I can justly lay claim to it? That is, why is having conscious desires value-giving in the first place?
 - (c) Have you considered that a slave can be conditioned not to desire his freedom, yet he's still entitled to it in virtue of his humanity? And what if my desire to live is greater than yours? Does that mean I have a greater right to life than you?
4. Objection: The Bible is silent on abortion; therefore, abortion is okay.
- (a) What do you mean by "silent?" Do you mean the word is not mentioned or that we can't draw any conclusions from what's written? Are you saying that whatever the Bible doesn't expressly condemn it condones? If not, what's your point?
 - (b) Tell me why you think the biblical authors don't mention abortion by name? What are your reasons for thinking their alleged silence justifies abortion?
 - (c) Have you considered that the Bible doesn't condemn many things by name including female infanticide and drive-by-shootings? Does that make them okay?
- E. Other questions to ask:
- 1. Are you deeply interested in doing what is right or are you committed to your view?
 - 2. When confronted with a good argument against a position you hold, what is your obligation?
 - 3. Here's a brief case for my view. Where does it go wrong? (syllogism)
 - 4. If abortion intentionally kills an innocent human being, what's wrong with passing laws against it?
 - 5. If there is no objective right and wrong, why tolerate other views?
 - 6. If nobody has the truth, why listen to other viewpoints?
 - 7. If it's wrong to hurt people because of their skin color or gender, why is it okay to hurt them based on size, development, or dependency?