

Words Make a Difference in The Abortion Debate

Julius Caesar reportedly said, “Language is a powerful weapon, and in the hands of a skilled person, it can be used to manipulate others.”

British writer George Orwell, in his famous novel *1984*, describes how the authorities used language to manipulate the population. He called this process “newspeak.” For example, “Joy camp” replaces the word “labor camp.” “[Department] of peace” replaces “[Department] of War.” The government agency that keeps the truth from people was called “the [Department] of Truth.” Government mottos were War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength.

We might think that this kind of language-twisting grammatical gymnastics is true only in dystopian novels, but it’s far more common in our society than we might like to admit. Some of the language common in the abortion debate is used to manipulate beliefs and behaviors.

We are observing Sanctity of Life Sunday today. Every year about this time I speak on the issue of abortion. Back in 1973, the SCOTUS issued a decision in the infamous *Roe vs. Wade* case that made abortion legal in all 50 states. Every year on the anniversary of that ruling, we celebrate the sanctity of human life in response to the culture of death.

Today I’d like to consider the language used by the two sides of the debate. And the language we use is very important. Language reflects beliefs. Either you believe that a baby in the womb is a valuable human being or you don’t. Human life is sacred or it’s not. There not much middle ground on this topic.

People on one side of the debate use language that upholds the idea that the pre-born baby is a real human being, made in the image of God, and having basic human rights. People of the other side of the debate use language demonstrating that they believe that a pre-born baby has no rights and no value. That’s what they believe, and the language they use reflects their attitude.

Let’s consider how the two sides of the debate use language.

- I. Pro-abortion/pro-choice vs. anti-abortion/pro-life/right to life
- A. Shortly after the Supreme Court decision on *Roe vs. Wade* (1973), those opposed to abortion adopted the term “pro-life” instead of “anti-abortion.” Supporters of abortion called themselves “pro-choice.”
1. “Pro-choice” implies that it’s the mother’s choice whether she will keep the baby or abort it. This description focuses on the rights of the mother—she has the right to make the choice regarding whether her baby will live or die.
 2. “Pro-life” implies that the baby is a human being even before it is born. That baby is a human life worthy of protection. This description focuses on the rights of the baby—it has a right to life.
- B. Most news outlets now use the term “anti-choice” or “anti-abortion rights” instead of “pro-life” to describe those who are against abortion. Those who are for abortion believe in “abortion rights” or “reproductive freedom.” Those against abortion are described as “anti-rights.” Pro-choice people are “pro-abortion rights” or “pro-reproductive health care.”
- C. No matter how they describe it, we know that many people are proudly pro-abortion. Many abortion supporters are very bold in their proclamations that abortion is a good thing. Women today “shout” their abortions. They gladly tell others how happy they are to have had an abortion. They claim abortion as a constitutional right. They see it as a positive good for society.
- D. Further, many people make a lot of money from abortion. I think that’s the main reason it’s still legal; it’s a lucrative business. Abortion doctors, nurses, and executives make millions of dollars from abortion. Political candidates receive millions from the abortion industry. Medical research makes millions from abortion. So “pro-abortion” is a term that is really true of many people. They value it; they see it as a good. It makes them a lot of money.
- By the way, abortion industry leader Planned Parenthood donated about \$45M to Joe Biden’s presidential campaign. They no doubt expect a big return on their investment.

Trans: Pro-abortion is a very accurate way to describe many people and organizations in our world today.

II. Fetus/products of conception/tissue/potential life vs. baby

- A. Scientists tell us that the very earliest stages of human life—that initial multi-celled organism—is called a zygote. After a bit more growth, it's called an embryo or a fetus. Anyone who values that little organism in the womb calls it a baby.
- B. The New York Times editorial board recently used the phrase “clusters of cells that have not yet developed into viable human beings,” in a discussion of rights being extended to a fetus in the womb.¹ They don't even want to call the baby a fetus.
- C. NPR recently published this policy statement regarding how their reporters are supposed to write about this issue:

The term “unborn” implies that there is a baby inside a pregnant woman, not a fetus. Babies are not babies until they are born. They're fetuses. Incorrectly calling a fetus a “baby” or “the unborn” is part of the strategy used by antiabortion groups to shift language/legality/public opinion.

- D. When an obstetrician talks to her pregnant patient, she calls the baby a baby. Friends and family have a baby shower. The mother shows a baby bump. The mother is “with child,” not “with a clump of tissue.” When a surgery is performed on an unborn baby to save its life or to fix a serious problem, it's called a baby, not a clump of cells.
- E. The aim of abortion supporters is to dehumanize the pre-born baby. They assert that it's not a human baby; it's merely the product of conception, an undeveloped cluster of cells.
- F. The problem is that that cluster of cells is actually a human being. That cluster of cells has everything necessary to develop into a regular person. All it lacks is growth and development.

Illus.: Do you know what a “snowflake” baby is? It's an embryo produced through invitro fertilization that has been kept frozen.

¹ Charles C. Camosy, “I Am Pro-Life. Don't Call Me Anti-Abortion.” *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 2019

Recently a “snowflake” baby/embryo was implanted into the womb of a woman and born about 9 months later. This “cluster of cells” had been conceived through IVF almost 27 years ago. The embryo was frozen in Oct 1992. The woman who received this frozen embryo was 29. There is only 18 months between true age of the mother and her daughter. This birth holds the record for the longest-frozen embryo known to result in a live birth.²

That “cluster of cells” is human. If it’s not a human, how can it be implanted in a woman’s womb and be born nine months later? If it’s not a human, why is Planned Parenthood selling the parts of aborted babies? Those parts have value because they are human.

III. Terminate the pregnancy vs. kill/murder

- A. Pro-abortion people don’t want us to think about what really happens in an abortion. Frankly, I’d rather not think about it either. Abortions are grisly, barbaric, violent procedures that result in the painful death of a human being.
- B. But those who support the practice don’t want to admit that. They are not killing a person they claim; they are merely terminating a pregnancy. They claim it’s like removing an appendix or a bad tooth. It’s a simple procedure that gets rid of something you don’t want. It’s relatively cheap, quick, and clean. It’s no big deal—that’s what they want us to think.
- C. We should call abortion what it really is—murder. It’s the taking of the life of an innocent person. There is no more innocent person than a pre-born baby. If that’s not murder in red blood, I don’t know what is.

IV. Parasite/foreign substance/leech/alien vs. baby

- A. The more stridently pro-abortion one is, the more like it is that she will refer to the unborn baby as a parasite, a foreigner, an alien, or even a leech. This invader occupies the body of the mother without asking permission and causes all sorts of inconveniences. If the woman does not want to be inconvenienced, or for any other reason, she has the legal right to remove the unwanted intruder from her body.

² Jane Ridley, “This record-breaking baby is 27 years old—2 years younger than her mom.” <https://nypost.com/2020/12/01/baby-is-27-years-old-just-two-years-younger-than-her-mom/>

- B. That baby is not unnatural; it's not a foreigner or alien. The Bible calls the baby "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." Babies are produced through a natural process that most women understand fairly well. In the vast majority of cases, the woman cooperated in the creation of that baby
 - C. If you want to dehumanize that baby, what do you do? You call it foreign, unnatural, and unhealthy. It's a leech or a parasite. You can't have any sympathy or compassion for it, so you think of it as an alien substance. But it's not. That baby is utterly natural and absolutely human. That's why killing it is murder.
- V. Bondage/disease vs. pregnancy
- A. Some women today describe pregnancy as bondage. They see it as a disease that they want to bring to an end. They feel like they are entrapped or contaminated for the length of the baby's gestation.
 - B. I think we all would agree that pregnancy for many women is a very difficult time. The presence of the baby in the womb does all sorts of inconvenient things to the woman's body. Some women seem to thrive in pregnancy, but many find it very difficult.
 - C. Once the baby is born, the bulk of the care for the baby falls to the woman, especially if she is a single mother. We can understand why some women might want to avoid having a baby, especially if they don't want to dedicate themselves to the care and feeding of that child.
 - D. Is there anything a woman can do to avoid experiencing the inconvenience and pain of pregnancy? Yes. If a woman chooses to avoid certain behaviors, then she is not likely to experience pregnancy. If she voluntarily engages in certain actions, then she should expect the natural results of her behavior to occur. Preventing pregnancy is not rocket science.
 - E. But once that child is in the womb, every ethical and moral instinct should tell the mother that she is obligated to care for her own baby. It's an unnatural sentiment that moves women to rid themselves of their own flesh and blood. Abortion is unnatural in just about every way conceivable.

VI. Reproductive rights vs. responsibilities and obligations

- A. Much of the debate boils down to rights vs. responsibilities. Does the mother have the right not to be pregnant if she doesn't want to be, or is she responsible to care for the baby that she helped create? Once that baby exists in the womb, what has more authority—the rights of the mother or the rights of the baby?
- B. Pro-abortionists believe that the rights of the mother trump the rights of the baby.
1. Some of them will admit that the object in the woman's womb is a human baby, but it's a person with no rights. It's the woman's right to kill it if she wants to.
 2. That's the pro-abortion position—the pre-born baby has no rights. Maybe it is a real person, but it is a person without rights.
 3. If that argument sounds familiar, it is. It's the same argument used by the Nazis in WWII to eradicate the Jews.
- C. If the baby is a human—and everything we know about the pre-born baby demonstrates that it is a human—it has just as many rights as the mother does. It's only when you dehumanize the baby that you can deny its natural rights.
- D. Should a mother be able to avoid responsibility for creating a baby? If she becomes pregnant, is she obligated to carry the baby to birth? Or, if she doesn't want the baby, does she have the right to get rid of it?
- E. Once that baby is conceived, the mother has the obligation to take care of it. If she didn't want to be pregnant, she should have taken the steps necessary to avoid creating that baby. Once the baby makes its appearance, the mother—as well as the father—are obligated to care for it. If they can't care for it, then they should give it to someone who will. People are waiting in line to care for babies that their parents don't want.

VII. Reproductive healthcare vs. murder

- A. Many of those who support abortion don't really like to use the word abortion. That word conjures up all sorts of unpleasant pictures. So they come up with alternative phrases like "reproductive healthcare." Doesn't that sound positive and clinical and clean? "She's not getting an abortion; she's getting healthcare." "Planned Parenthood provides healthcare." The word "healthcare" sounds so positive; it's caring for one's health.
- B. In the case of abortion, what's "healthcare" for the woman is death for the baby. What about the baby's healthcare? How do you call the dismemberment of a perfectly healthy pre-born baby "healthcare"? It's a perfect example of newspeak—it's manipulative language that hides the truth.
- C. The truth is that pro-abortion people don't care about the baby at all. The baby is disposable. If no one wants it, it has no value.
- D. Pro-abortion people should be honest. There's no way that abortion should be confused with healthcare; it's the exact opposite of care. Abortion happens when the mother and the doctor don't care for the baby.

VIII. Embryonic pulsing vs. fetal heartbeat

- A. One of the most exciting events for new parents is when they go to the doctor and hear the heartbeat of their baby for the first time. It often is a very emotional experience to hear the "swoosh swoosh" of that tiny beating heart.
- B. I read one article that claimed that the "swoosh swoosh" sound that parents hear at their obstetrician's office is not really a heartbeat; it's just an electrical impulse that will eventually become a heartbeat.
- C. Simple observation tells us that a baby's heart begins beating at about 6-7 weeks of life. By the 10th week, the heart is fully developed and functioning as it does in adults. But the pro-abortion people tell us that it's not really a heartbeat. It's just an "electrical impulse."
- D. The problem is that you can't hear an electrical impulse. Heartbeats make a swoosh swoosh sound. Describing the heartbeat as a mere electrical impulse further degrades and dehumanizes the baby. "Don't feel bad about stopping a beating heart. It's not really a beating heart; it's just electrical impulses."

- E. Pro-life legislators have introduced bills in many states stipulating that abortion should be illegal after the baby's heart begins to beat. I think all abortion should be outlawed, but this is at least a step in the right direction. If a baby has a heartbeat, it should be illegal to kill it.

IX. Want vs. need

- A. News accounts often speak of a woman "needing" an abortion. Why does she need an abortion? In the vast majority of cases, she "needs" an abortion because she does not want a baby. It's not that her life is in danger or that she will suffer irreparable harm if she has the baby. She just doesn't want it. A baby will be inconvenient, painful, and expensive. In many cases, women seeking abortions are not married; they have little or no support. So if a woman has any reason not to want the baby, she "needs" to have an abortion.

- B. Need and want are two different words with two different meanings. In only a very small minority of cases does a woman "need" to have an abortion. Only in those very rare cases where the baby *must* be aborted to save the life of the mother does an abortion "need" to happen.

In an ectopic pregnancy, for example, the embryo has implanted in the wrong place; it has no chance of survival; it will die. Taking the baby's life in such a case is not murder, and it will save the life of the mother.

- C. Situations in which pregnancy actually threatens the life of the mother are very rare. With advances in medicine and in neo-natal care, it's almost never necessary to choose between the life of the mother and the life of the baby. When it's *absolutely* necessary to take the life of the baby in order to save the life of the mother, it's not the same as a voluntary abortion.

- D. Many people say that abortion should be ethically acceptable in the case of rape or incest. I disagree with that. Two wrongs don't make a right. The baby is not guilty and does not deserve to die no matter how it was created. The best way for good to come out of a bad situation like that is to allow the baby to be born and then give it up for adoption if the mother doesn't want it.

X. Evil vs. good

- A. Ultimately, the abortion debate is a matter of evil vs. good, sinfulness vs. righteousness, and rebellion vs. obedience. Those who have any kind of commitment to the God of the Christian Bible recognize that abortion is murder, and murder is a great sin. Those who participate in abortion, especially those who facilitate it or do the procedures, are especially evil people. They are involved in heinous sin. They are shedding innocent blood, something God hates. They are guilty of mass murder, and they will face severe, just, and eternal punishment.
- B. Can you be a good person and support abortion? No, not if you understand what abortion is. I suppose, hypothetically, some people don't really understand what abortion is; they don't realize that it's the murder of an innocent human being. They've been taught that abortion is not murder, and that's what they believe. But if you know what abortion is and you support it or participate in it in any way, you are an evil, wicked person.
- C. Are there good people on both sides of this debate? No, there's only one good side of this debate, and that's the pro-life side. The other side is pro-death, and they are promoting the culture of death. This is a clear-cut, black and white issue, and all Christians of every stripe ought to be on the right side of it.

Julius Caesar was right. "Language is a powerful weapon ... [that] can be used to manipulate others." Pro-abortionists use language to manipulate ignorant people into thinking that abortion is healthcare and a constitutional right when it is neither.

Pro-abortionists are guilty of newspeak; they want to use language that de-humanizes the unborn baby and that hides the truth of what abortion really is. They repeat the lie loudly enough and frequently enough, and many people believe it. They have been largely successful in persuading about half of the population that abortion is a good thing.

Pro-life supporters use language that reveals the true value of unborn humans as well as the nature of abortion. Pro-life supporters promote the culture of life. They believe the baby in the womb is human life, worthy of protection and care. That baby has the right to life. Abortion is murder, plain and simple. Those who participate in abortion are murderers, as are those who support it or profit from it.

Telling the truth about abortion is very offensive these days. Perhaps the government will at some point label such language as hate speech. They may try to shut us down for saying such things. But until they do, we must be bold in proclaiming that abortion is a terribly unjust, barbaric, and ungodly practice. Those who participate in it or support it commit the gravest of sins and are liable to strict and eternal judgment. No manipulative language can change that fact.