

Statement on The Biblical View of Unborn Life and Its Implications for Abortion

Human beings are created in the image of God. Part of the gift that God has given us as humans is procreation, the ability to participate in creation along with the Author of life. This sacred gift should always be valued and treasured. In God's original plan every pregnancy should be the result of the expression of love between a man and a woman committed to each other in marriage. A pregnancy should be wanted, and each baby should be loved, valued, and nurtured even before birth. Unfortunately, since the entrance of sin, Satan has made intentional efforts to mar the image of God by defacing all of God's gifts—including the gift of procreation. Consequently, individuals are at times faced with difficult dilemmas and decisions regarding a pregnancy.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed to the teachings and principles of the Holy Scriptures which express God's values on life and provide guidance for prospective mothers and fathers, medical personnel, churches, and all believers in matters of faith, doctrine, ethical behaviour, and lifestyle. The Church while not being the conscience of individual believers has the duty to convey the principles and teachings of the Word of God.

This statement affirms the sanctity of life and presents biblical principles bearing on abortion. As used in this statement, abortion is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy and does not include the spontaneous termination of a pregnancy, known also as a miscarriage.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND TEACHINGS RELATING TO ABORTION

As the practice of abortion must be weighed in the light of Scripture, the following biblical principles and teachings provide guidance for the community of faith and individuals affected by such difficult choices:

1. *God upholds the value and sacredness of human life.* Human life is of the greatest value to God. Having created humanity in His image (Genesis 1:27; 2:7), God has a personal interest in people. God loves them and communicates with them, and they in turn can love and communicate with Him.

Life is a gift of God, and God is the Giver of life. In Jesus is life (John 1:4). He has life in Himself (John 5:26). He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25; 14:6). He provides abundant life (John 10:10). Those who have the Son have life (1 John 5:12). He is also the Sustainer of life (Acts 17:25-28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:1-3), and the Holy Spirit is described as the Spirit of life (Romans 8:2). God cares deeply for His creation and especially for humankind.

Furthermore, the importance of human life is made clear by the fact that, after the Fall (Genesis 3), God "gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). While God could have abandoned and terminated sinful humanity, He opted for life. Consequently, Christ's followers will be raised from the dead and will live in face-to-face communion with God (John 11:25-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16; Revelation 21:3). Thus, human life is of

inestimable value. This is true for all stages of human life: the unborn, children of various ages, adolescents, adults, and seniors—independent of physical, mental, and emotional capacities. It is also true for all humans regardless of sex, ethnicity, social status, religion, and whatever else may distinguish them. Such an understanding of the sanctity of life gives inviolable and equal value to each and every human life and requires it to be treated with the utmost respect and care.

2. *God considers the unborn child as human life.* Prenatal life is precious in God's sight, and the Bible describes God's knowledge of people before they were conceived. "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" (Psalm 139:16). In certain cases, God directly guided prenatal life. Samson was to "be a Nazirite to God from the womb" (Judges 13:5). The servant of God is "called from the womb" (Isaiah 49:1, 5). Jeremiah was already chosen as a prophet before his birth (Jeremiah 1:5), as was Paul (Galatians 1:15), and John the Baptist was to "be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). Of Jesus the angel Gabriel explained to Mary: "therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). In His Incarnation Jesus Himself experienced the human prenatal period and was recognized as the Messiah and Son of God soon after His conception (Luke 1:40-45). The Bible already attributes to the unborn child joy (Luke 1:44) and even rivalry (Genesis 25:21-23). Those not-yet-born have a firm place with God (Job 10:8-12; 31:13-15). Biblical law shows a strong regard for protecting human life and considers harm to or the loss of a baby or mother as a result of a violent act a serious issue (Exodus 21:22-23).

3. *The will of God regarding human life is expressed in the Ten Commandments and explained by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.* The Decalogue was given to God's covenant people and the world to guide their lives and protect them. Its commandments are unchanging truths which should be cherished, respected, and obeyed. The Psalmist praises God's law (e.g., Psalm 119), and Paul calls it holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:12). The sixth commandment states: "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13), which calls for the preservation of human life. The principle to preserve life enshrined in the sixth commandment places abortion within its scope. Jesus reinforced the commandment not to kill in Matthew 5:21-22. Life is protected by God. It is not measured by individuals' abilities or their usefulness, but by the value that God's creation and sacrificial love has placed on it. Personhood, human value, and salvation are not earned or merited but graciously granted by God.

4. *God is the Owner of life, and human beings are His stewards.* Scripture teaches that God owns everything (Psalm 50:10-12). God has a dual claim on humans. They are His because He is their Creator and therefore He owns them (Psalm 139:13-16). They are also His because He is their Redeemer and has bought them with the highest possible price—His own life (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This means that all human beings are stewards of whatever God has entrusted to them, including their own lives, the lives of their children, and the unborn.

The stewardship of life also includes carrying responsibilities which in some ways limit their choices (1 Corinthians 9:19-22). Since God is the Giver and Owner of life, human beings do not have ultimate control over themselves and should seek to preserve life wherever possible. The principle of the stewardship of life obligates the

community of believers to guide, support, care for, and love those facing decisions about pregnancies.

5. *The Bible teaches care for the weak and the vulnerable.* God Himself cares for those who are disadvantaged and oppressed and protects them. He “shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing” (Deuteronomy 10:17-18, cf. Psalm 82:3-4; James 1:27). He does not hold children accountable for the sins of their fathers (Ezekiel 18:20). God expects the same of His children. They are called to help vulnerable people and ease their lot (Psalm 41:1; 82:3-4; Acts 20:35). Jesus speaks of the least of His brothers (Matthew 25:40), for whom His followers are responsible, and of the little ones who should not be despised or lost (Matthew 18:10-14). The very youngest, namely the unborn, should be counted among them.

6. *God’s grace promotes life in a world marred by sin and death.* It is God’s nature to protect, preserve, and sustain life. In addition to the providence of God over His creation (Psalm 103:19; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3), the Bible acknowledges the wide-ranging, devastating, and degrading effects of sin on the creation, including on human bodies. In Romans 8:20-24 Paul describes the impact of the Fall as subjecting the creation to futility. Consequently, in rare and extreme cases, human conception may produce pregnancies with fatal prospects and/or acute, life-threatening birth anomalies that present individuals and couples with exceptional dilemmas. Decisions in such cases may be left to the conscience of the individuals involved and their families. These decisions should be well-informed and guided by the Holy Spirit and the biblical view of life outlined above. God’s grace promotes and protects life. Individuals in these challenging situations may come to Him in sincerity and find direction, comfort, and peace in the Lord.

IMPLICATIONS

The Seventh-day Adventist Church considers abortion out of harmony with God’s plan for human life. It affects the unborn, the mother, the father, immediate and extended family members, the church family, and society with long-term consequences for all. Believers aim to trust God and follow His will for them, knowing He has their best interests in mind.

While not condoning abortion, the Church and its members are called to follow the example of Jesus, being “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), to (1) create an atmosphere of true love and provide grace-filled, biblical pastoral care and loving support to those facing difficult decisions regarding abortion; (2) enlist the help of well-functioning and committed families and educate them to provide care for struggling individuals, couples, and families; (3) encourage church members to open their homes to those in need, including single parents, parentless children, and adoptive or foster care children; (4) care deeply for and support in various ways pregnant women who decide to keep their unborn children; and (5) provide emotional and spiritual support to those who have aborted a child for various reasons or were forced to have an abortion and may be hurting physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually.

The issue of abortion presents enormous challenges, but it gives individuals and the Church the opportunity to be what they aspire to be, the fellowship of brothers and sisters, the community of believers, the family of God, revealing His immeasurable and unfailing love.

This statement was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council Session in Silver Spring, Maryland on October 16, 2019.