

RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE

It really takes a lot of wisdom to function in a world that is as complex as ours. For example, we saw in the newspaper a couple of weeks ago the story about a young woman that had been in a coma for several years and was being kept alive by feeding tubes. The family had been to court to have the feeding stopped so that she could die. The hospital and some right-to-life groups had opposed the action. The family won its point and the woman was allowed to die. Was that the right thing to do? It's hard to say. I read just this week of another woman that was a victim of cancer and had gone into a coma for several years. Her feeding tubes were removed and within a day she came out of the coma. She lived only one week longer because of the cancer. These are difficult decision situations. We go by to visit friends that are in vegetative conditions, being fed with tubes and seemingly not knowing anyone in this world and we think, "I hope that doesn't happen to me, I'd rather just die with dignity." What's the right thing to do? It is difficult to say.

On the other end of life, we read statistics about the number of abortions that are carried out each day in the USA. The latest figures are 4400 pre-born babies are killed each day. That's over 1.5 million each year. In Tennessee alone, there are more than 20,000 each year and has been for more than the past 10 years. By far, the majority of the abortions are carried out on unmarried women and the reason for the abortion in over 95% of the cases has nothing to do with rape, incest, or the health of the mother. The majority of the cases, it is nothing less than a barbaric form of birth control. We have become callous to the reality of abortion in this the most enlightened and Biblically oriented nation on this earth. We need to examine what the Bible, the Word of God, says on the subject of the sanctity of human life and then in the light of those teachings decide what we will do about this tragedy in our nation.

What does the Bible say about human life? To find out, we need to go back to the beginning of human life:

GENESIS 1:27 Being created in the image of God is more than just the possibility of personality, self-awareness, intelligence, the ability to communicate, will and emotions. If we limit the implications of being created in the image of God to only these things, then many people will argue that some higher forms of animal life exhibit such characteristics. We learn in the conversation that Jesus had with the woman at the well that God is spirit; therefore, we must conclude that an essential part of being created in the image of God is that we possess a spiritual nature. That spiritual nature was the unique possession of humanity that other life in God's creation does not possess. Because of our spiritual nature we have the potential to become more and more like God in His character. This is our highest potential. It is the fact that humans are created in the image of God that murder was prohibited (Gen.9:6). There is no evidence that the image of God is limited to a select group of the human race and there is no evidence that it is limited to age or location of the body (inside or outside of the womb). It is not limited to those with a certain level of intelligence or to condition of physical health. Therefore, the worth of human life is not dependent on the presence of anything else. Anything that depreciates and does not protect the value of life should be a concern to every human being and especially to every Christian.

MATTHEW 5:13-16 In the time before refrigeration, salt was very important to preserve meats. People still use salt to cure hams and bacon, and salt is important in pickling vegetables. If we are to function as salt in the world, then we must be about the business of preserving or

saving people and things. The influence of Christian concern has changed the way people are treated in nearly all areas of life. It is our Christian responsibility to be a good influence on people that might otherwise be ruined in moral and spiritual corruption. Sometimes the influence of salt is rather subtle and at other times a heavy application is needed. Our influence as Christians can be both subtle and obvious. The subtle ways are there by our example and help and the obvious ways are when we take united action as a body to change things that are blatantly wrong. The church should openly oppose gambling, the sale of liquor, abortion, divorce, pornography, drugs, and any other thing that is harmful to individuals and society in general.

In our role as being the light of the world, we are to teach what the word of God says. We should be ready at all times to be able to respond to whatever questions there may be in life or about life with what the Word of God says. Many people are in spiritual darkness because they do not know God's way and we have an obligation to let the light we have been given shine.

MATTHEW 5:21-22 The laws that we have in the Old Testament and those that are on the books of our various states related to limits that we, as a society, put on behavior and actions. None of the laws that I know of say anything about attitude. Yet attitude precedes action. Anger is an emotional response that can grow out of an uncontrolled attitude. There are people who seem to be mad all the time and with everything. Nothing pleases them and the slightest thing that goes contrary to their expectation can put them in a rage. Many of the murders that we read about are so-called crimes of passion; that is crimes that are committed in a highly emotional state of mind. What is lacking is a genuine concern for the victim or the target of the anger.

Many times we tend to undervalue other people. Failure to place proper value on a fellow human being might easily lead to something more serious. The Jewish people apparently had an expression "Raca" which was an insult that was used on someone in much the same way we use the word "idiot." Insulting someone in this way does damage to a person's reputation and his opinion of himself. We can assassinate a person's character or his self-image without committing murder.

MATTHEW 5:27-28 One of the strongest human drives is the sexual drive. It can be a powerful force for good as it works out in expressions of love in a marriage and the resultant family situation that this love creates. It can also be destructive if it is not controlled and contained within the bounds of love and respect for persons. Once again, Jesus cautions about attitudes that are the source for our actions. What anger is to murder, lust is to adultery. In today's society, the uncontrolled passions of people have led to unplanned pregnancies that have resulted in abortions. Some would say that lust can lead to the destruction of innocent human life.

MATTHEW 5:43-45 In the discourse that Jesus gave to the people and actions that were addressed in the law and the corresponding attitudes that leads to the wrong action, we see that there is a positive choice or alternative that more than counteracts the negative. One would think that loving our neighbor would be a good, positive thing to do. It is, however, by extending love to our enemies, then we go beyond the neutral point to the possibility of making a break through in relationships. This love for our enemies is expressed in things that we do for them. Bless them that curse us, pray for those that abuse us. Do good for them that hate you. The results is that we will be fulfilling what it really means to be made in the image of God. We will be children of our Heavenly Father.