

Being Pro-Life Has Never Been Easy

Months ago, undercover Planned Parenthood videos revealed the atrocities tied up with the act and business of abortion. Their portrayal of what goes on in clinics across our country was both heartbreaking and horrifying.

They've ignited a new passion and fire in the hearts of Christians rallying for the pro-life cause. Our movement has fresh motivation and energy. Ahead of January's annual March for Life, evangelical organizations including Focus on the Family and the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission are planning their first major conference in conjunction with the event.

Plus, there's greater pressure for the government to defund Planned Parenthood, a federal move that has long seemed so far-fetched it would take a miracle. For many pro-life Christians, it feels like this timing—the video evidence, the changing state laws, the enthusiasm on our side—will finally ensure that we will change minds and change policies in our country.

Yet despite the brutality that we've observed, despite the furor among pro-life leaders, the minds of the people on the other side of the issue don't seem to be changing that much. As recently as last month, a Gallup poll found 59 percent of Americans had a favorable view of Planned Parenthood, while 37 percent held an unfavorable view. The numbers have shifted compared to 20 years ago—but still over half of Americans approve of the country's largest abortion provider.

More than that, the pro-choice movement has become more vocal and more critical of our convictions. When we speak out for life, we get accused of not respecting women, their bodies, or their autonomy. Even at a time when it seems like the evidence is on our side, when we should be eager to speak the truth in love, we have to wrestle with the fear over liberal-leaning friends and onlookers not understanding and mischaracterizing our position. It's disheartening. But just as the saying goes, there's nothing new under the sun. Being pro-life has never been easy.

Obeying God's commands and doing what's right doesn't always line up with popular opinion, and it can require sacrifice. Defending human life seems so fundamental to us, but we see throughout history how societies have condoned and even normalized killing. In the early centuries of Christianity, church leaders argued against abortion or

infanticide as practiced in Greco-Roman society. Even in the Old Testament, God's people found themselves struggling to defend and save the youngest lives among them against a barbaric slaughter. In Exodus, the new Pharaoh in Egypt has begun to suspect the growing Hebrew population would be a threat to him and his rule (Ex. 1:12). As was foretold in Scripture, he targets and oppresses the people of Israel. They were enslaved and forced to do hard labor. To cease their growth (a blessing from God), Pharaoh went after their sons—their babies.

We know the story: Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill every son born to a Hebrew woman. At this point, the women had every reason to fear Pharaoh. A leader with the authority to command such a mass slaughter could likewise order them to be killed if they did not obey. But they did not submit to his maniacal plan. Instead Exodus records, "But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live" (Ex. 1:17). When asked to kill their babies, their people, the midwives chose what was right. Even at risk to their own lives, they chose to fear the Lord and obey him.

These women weren't strong and mighty in power—they were strong and mighty in faith. They feared and honored God—the God of wrath and judgment, the God of mercy and grace. Make no mistake, there's no guarantee that God will keep us from earthly harm, or even death at the hands of power. But God does say that those who trust in him are safe for eternity (Prov. 29:25).

Our conviction for life and advocacy for the unborn may change hearts and minds through faithful witness. Or it may continue to open us up to ridicule, slander, and persecution. Either way, we can stand in our position knowing that we trust God and his ways. When given the option to obey the voice of God or the opposition, let us not fear the wrath of Pharaoh. Instead, let us ask God to help us fear him above all things and trust him to use our faith to bless many generations to come.

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