

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor  
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## Exodus 20:13 “The Sanctity of Human Life”

Intro. Today is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. Many churches, all across denominational lines, observe this special emphasis. The reason *this* day is observed as Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is because this is the anniversary of the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision which legalized abortion in all states.

I hope you will understand the seriousness of what I will share today. The very moral foundations of our society have been crumbling for some time. One of the most clear-cut evidences of this is the erosion of the concept of the sanctity of human life. Yes, human life is unique and special. Christian philosopher Francis Shaeffer warned over four decades ago that the legal and popular acceptance of abortion would snowball to the acceptance of other forms of killing. Likewise, Mother Teresa said, “if we accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?” Today, doctor assisted suicide is becoming accepted and legal in more and more states. Suicides are up 50% since 2,000. The number of mass murders at schools has increased significantly since abortion was legalized.<sup>1</sup>

We do not want to become like other countries where there is little value upon human life. In many countries with minimal Christian influence, life is cheap and there are leaders who think nothing of having people killed. Hitler killed millions of people. Saddam Husein killed thousands and thousands of his own people. In Africa, literally millions have been killed through political, tribal, or religious conflict. In many Muslim and Communist countries murder by the State or terrorist groups is so widespread. Shedding innocent blood seems to be a way of life for those people. This cheapening of life has also been true of the more distant past as well. I remember reading about Napoleon, who was making plans for a great battle. One of his associates said to him, “This will cost 100,000 of our men.” He replied, “100,000 men! What is 100,000 men to me?”

I believe that we need a restoration of the concept of the sanctity of human life in our country. That is foundational to any discussion of the issue of abortion. I realize that most in my audience already hold a high view of human life. Few if any of you would seriously contemplate abortion. But Jesus said that we are to be the salt and light of the world. My task is to strengthen your conviction and equip you to influence others.

So let’s look into the Word of God together. I want to share first:

### I. THE BASIS FOR THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

Human life is different from other life forms. It is sacred, special and unique. I will tell you why. First of all, that is true because of:

A. The Commandments of God’s Word – Ex. 20:13 gives us one of the 10 commandments: “You shall not murder.” In this commandment God has established the sanctity of human life. Did you notice the change in translation from the one many of us memorized long ago? Instead of

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<sup>1</sup> The murder rate in the U.S. began a steady increase in 1963, the year prayer was removed from public school. It peaked in 1980. It began a steady decline in 1990 and has returned to the 1963 level, in spite of the fact that the number of new guns in the U.S. has increased about 400% since 1997 (mises.org).

“Thou shalt not kill,” many newer translations use the word “murder” instead of “kill.” That’s because the Hebrew term does not refer to *all* types of killing, such as the killing of an animal for food, clothing or sacrifice. The term specifically refers to murder, the unlawful taking of human life. Ex. 21:12-14 makes it clear that murder is not the accidental killing of someone, but the premeditated killing of someone. And even before the 10 commandments were given, God had said in Gen. 9:6, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.” Even before that, in Gen. 4:10 God says concerning the murder of Abel, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.” God did not ignore the murder of Abel, and He will not ignore the bloodshed of millions and millions of people.

By the way, this commandment does not forbid the death penalty, for that is not murder. The only one who has the right to take life is the One who has given life. Therefore, only God has the right to give man the authority to take another life in certain cases. God has done this in His Word, as we have already seen in Genesis 9:6, “by man shall his blood be shed.” So far as I am able to discover, that commandment of God has never been revoked in Scripture. In Romans 13 the Scripture seems to be very clear that God gives to legitimate government the authority to take human life from those who have committed murder.

B. The Uniqueness of Human Life – Again, God had said in Gen. 9:6, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.” There is something unique about human life. Human life was created separately from animal life. You see, back in Gen. 1:26-27, we read that we are unique in that we as humans are made in the image of God, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Being made in the image of God gives life its sacredness. When you kill a bug you are just killing a bug. But when you kill a human, you are striking at someone made in God’s image. And through the process of human reproduction, this life created in the image of God is transmitted from generation to generation in an unbroken chain.

Furthermore, when God created Adam in His image, Gen. 2:7 says He distinguished human beings from the animal kingdom by breathing into their bodies the breath of life, and human being became living souls. Human life began when God shaped Adam and breathed into him the breath of life. Adam no longer was just a mass of material compounds, but a living, breathing, and thinking person.

Folks, the animal rights activists just do not accept the biblical distinction between the sacredness of human life and the proper use of animal life. It is one thing to be against cruelty of animals (Prov. 12:10), but it’s another thing to be vocally and radically opposed to be the killing of animals for food, for clothing, and for the use of animals in important medical research. Why do you think they make such a big deal about the treatment of animals? It is because they have rejected the biblical basis for human rights. If godless evolution is true, then there is very little essential difference between human life and animal life. And so to be consistent, these people must grant the same rights to animals as we give to people. Do you see what happens when we reject the Bible?

C. The Creator Alone Controls Life and Death Decisions - Psa. 100:3 says, “It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves....” God gives life, and only God has the right to take human life. Job proclaimed concerning the death of his children, “The LORD gave, and the LORD has

taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD” (1:21). In a miscarriage an unborn baby is lost because there was something medically wrong. That is far different from a doctor causing an otherwise healthy baby to die in the womb. We must not “play God” with human life.

Once we accept the biblical teaching regarding the sanctity of human life, then we must apply that understanding to various situations. So let’s consider next:

## II. THE APPLICATIONS OF THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

Obviously principle of the sanctity of life applies to homicide. I read that over 16,000 people are murdered in America every year. There were 762 murders in Chicago alone. We are living indeed in a violent society. Only the most morally depraved among us would defend the murder of another fully functioning human being from the time of their birth. But there are other forms of the killing of human life that violate the principle of the sanctity of life. We need to address these applications of the sanctity of human life. First of all let’s begin with:

A. Suicide – This is taking your own life. As we have seen, it is God that gives life, and only God has the right to take life (Job 1:21). Life is not ours to take. Yet there are over 44,000 suicides every year in America, some of which are murder-suicides. That number is up about 50% since the year 2000. Some have estimated that there are as many as 400,000 *attempted* suicides every year. Suicide is becoming more and more an experience that is happening to young people. 5,000-6,000 young people a year successfully take their own life. I realize that many of them feel like that they have serious problems, but it is not right to take your own life. But some will say, “I’m just going to take my own life. I’m just going to end it all.” If it were true that there is no God, then suicide would end it all, at least for the person who dies. But suicide does *not* end it all, not for your family that’s left with that hurt and heartache that will often stay with them the rest of their lives. Death by suicide doesn’t end it all for you either. You still can’t avoid having to meet God. The Bible says in Heb. 9:17, “It is appointed unto man once to die and after this the judgment.” Amos 4:12 says, “Prepare to meet your God.” There are no circumstances that are so serious that the God of heaven cannot help you go through them and bring you to a deeper experience of His grace in the midst of them. Many saints of God have demonstrated an ability to go through incredible suffering, and yet maintain peace and joy. God assured us, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9).

I do want to assure believers who have had a loved one who died at their own hands that God is merciful, and certainly understands when suicide results from deep depression or some other mental illness. When strong emotional mood swings take hold of people they no longer can think rationally. My sister suffered from depression and mania for years and took her life at the age of 51. She was otherwise a godly believer. At the moment she did that she was so depressed she wasn’t thinking straight. She never would have left her precious children, and missed out on seeing her two precious grandchildren who have been born since, if she had been rational at the time.

B. Euthanasia – The last 25 years or so there has been a growing acceptance of the practice of euthanasia. Those who believe in euthanasia say that we should have the right to end human life when life becomes too painful due to terminal illness or even emotional illness. The country of Holland legalized the practice years ago. Dr. Jack Kevorkian, known as Dr. Death, dared legal authorities and juries to convict him of murder for his practice of doctor assisted suicide. Though I agree that we should not feel obligated to keep a terminally ill patient alive artificially, God should

be in control of the time of our death. Also, once we permit the assisted death of some, we open the door for government authorities to make a decision regarding whose life is no longer valuable, worthwhile, or needed.

C. Indirect Killing - You can kill in indirect ways. You can kill indirectly by hiring a hit-man, as the mother did in Texas who in 1991 hired a hit man to kill the mother of a rival girl who was seeking the same spot for the J.H. cheerleading squad! (wikipedia.org). King David did something similar. He saw to it that someone else would kill Uriah that he might cover his sin of adultery.

You can also kill indirectly by driving drunk. At least a third of all of the traffic deaths by accident in this country are a result of drunken driving. 10,000 people a year are killed — slaughtered on our streets by drunken driving. Those who consume alcohol run the risk of manslaughter. You say, “I wouldn’t drink and drive.” That reminds me of the beer commercial that came out a number of years ago. They have a slogan that says, “Know when to say when.” Have you thought about that? After you have had a couple of drinks and your judgment is already beginning to be impaired, you’re supposed to have the sense to know when to stop drinking. You’re supposed to still have enough sound judgment not to drive in your condition. That’s really smart!

Furthermore, the sale or giving of alcoholic beverages can be indirect killing. You can rationalize or excuse it anyway you want, but alcohol has many defenders but no defense. In addition to traffic fatalities, 40% of all murders involve alcohol in some way. In 30% of all suicides alcohol is involved. Then, those who sell mind-altering drugs contribute to thousands of deaths every year. In light of the sanctity of life, we cannot take these deaths lightly.

D. Abortion – By far the greatest number of people killed each year is by means of abortion. Over 59,000,000 have been killed through abortion since 1973. Thankfully, the number of abortions/year is declining. Last year there were probably about a million abortions in the U.S. Do you see why abortion is such a major issue to those who believe in the sanctity of human life?

Now in order to apply abortion to the issue of the sanctity of human life, then we must establish that an unborn baby is a human life. Justice Blackmun, who supported the court’s decision to legalize abortion said, “We need not resolve the question of when life begins.” But that is exactly what the court has done. The Roe vs. Wade decision means that in the eyes of the Court, life begins at birth and not before! But when you die you will not stand before the Supreme Court of the U.S. as your judge. You will stand before God. So we should be more concerned about what *God* thinks, than what man thinks.

So is an unborn baby a human life? The answer is, “yes.” First of all, there are,

1. Scriptural Indications - One important text is Psa. 139:13-16, “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.... My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts .... Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed....” The psalmist refers to himself 10 times in his unborn condition with the personal pronouns. He clearly declares his personhood while yet in his mother’s womb. In Jer. 1:5 God says to the prophet, “...And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.” And the development of John the Baptist in the womb of his mother Elizabeth is instructive. In Luke 1:15 it says that John was “filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.” The filling of the Holy Spirit comes only to persons, and not mere cells and tissue. Furthermore, Luke 1:41 says that after Mary, the mother of Jesus spoke, John leaped in his mother’s womb!” Elizabeth

was at least 6 months pregnant at this time. By the way, doctors know that an unborn baby can hear, and even respond. Also, I believe it is worth noting that Dr. Luke uses the word “babe” to describe John as an unborn baby. That same word is used elsewhere in the New Testament of a newborn baby (Lk. 2:16), and even used for a “young child” (2 Tim. 3:15). Thus, the Bible makes no distinction between the humanity and personhood of the born and the unborn. Can anyone rationally conclude that the unborn child is not a human being?

There is at least one text where God decrees the protection of the unborn from harm. Look at Ex. 21:22-23, “If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly ...as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life....” The law is describing a pregnant woman who is struck in the process of a fight between two men. Perhaps she tried to come to the aid of her husband. Literally it simply indicates that the unborn child “came out.” The NIV and NKJV interpret it to refer to a premature birth, which is what I believe. One outcome indicates that the baby and mother turn out to be OK. In that case, only a fine is to be given. But if she goes into early labor, and the baby dies, and/or the mother dies, then the offender is subject to his own life being taken. That shows the value God places on unborn life.

2. Physical and Scientific Evidence – At conception the new organism has its own DNA distinct from the mother and father, meaning that it is already a unique person. At conception all physical characteristics have been determined. Before the end of the first month there is beating heart and the eyes and other organs are developing. Brain waves can be detected by the end of the fifth or sixth week. By 6-9 weeks the baby already has its own fingerprints. At 8 weeks all the organs are functioning. A 12 week-old unborn baby is only about 2 inches long, yet every organ of the human body and every attribute of a human being are already developing in place. Tiny fingers and toes, the intricately formed ears and nose, the arms and legs are firmly in place. The baby reacts to touch, kicks, makes fists, and sucks its thumb. The pre-born do hear, feel, and respond. Furthermore, psychiatrist Thomas Verny says that the baby, soon after conception “possesses enough self-awareness to sense rejection.” They are even aware of their mother’s attitude toward them.

The “pro-abortionists” are wrong when they tell young women that the so-called fetus is nothing more than a protrusion or a growth that is part of their body.

[I could also address infanticide but it is relatively rare. The rate of murder of birth-12 months in the U.S. is more than 3 times greater than for the murder of preschool children].

### III. THE ALTERNATIVES TO ABORTION

A. Maintain Sexual Purity – 1 Cor. 6:18 says, “Flee sexual immorality.” 1 Thess. 4:3 says, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality....” God had very good reasons for giving us His moral laws regarding sexual morality. One reason is to significantly reduce the likelihood of abortion and infanticide. You see, there are many issues to consider before becoming involved in sexual intimacy, but one key issue is the potential for the creation of human life. Many young people get involved in premarital sex thinking that pregnancy would not happen to them. But young ladies, you are probably the most fertile during your middle to late teenage years. Since sexual passions cloud good judgment, and since intimacy so often results in the creation of human life, sexual intimacy should only be exercised within the *commitment* of marriage. On average a child will do far better in life if raised by both their father and mother. If you have sexual relations only within marriage, you will avoid putting yourself in a

situation where there will be great pressure to have an abortion. This will deal with the root of the problem. Feminists protest that they have the right to “control their own bodies.” If youth and adults would only exercise sexual self-control outside of marriage there would be far less abortions. Rabbit-brained promiscuity and self-indulgence is the problem. Yield yourself to the control of Holy Spirit and you will have self-control, according to Gal. 5:23.

Ladies, you typically have more to lose when you give in to sexual immorality. So maintain appropriate modesty in your dress. Both men and women should set standards for your date life that will reduce the likelihood of sexual immorality, such as not being alone with the opposite sex behind closed doors. Men especially need to avoid pornography. The sexual revolution has produced as host of children growing up in fatherless homes and we are reaping the consequences of that in our society. Just look at our major cities today!

And parents, you have a responsibility here as well. Talk to your kids and about the biblical teaching of sexual morality. Set rules which will protect them from premarital sexual activity. And fathers, I believe you have a special responsibility in regard to your daughters. If you allow them to date, insist that the boy come to your door to pick up your daughter. Make sure that the two of you stand face-to-face, eyeball to eyeball, and put some of the fear of God in him! Make it clear to him what you expect.

What happens when you yield to temptation and pregnancy results?

B. Choose Life for the Unborn – Instead over covering up your wrong-doing with an abortion, one alternative is to give your baby up for adoption. There is hardly such thing as an “unwanted baby.” There are thousands of loving families who fervently desire to adopt a baby, but they are frustrated because of the small number of children available for adoption. What a blessing these parents would be to a child. Most all of these parents would provide much love and many advantages to your child. I can testify that as the parent of both a natural born child and an adopted child there is no difference in love for your children! Abortion not only denies life to a baby, but it deprives many would-be parents from adopting a child.

Of course there are situations where it is in the long-term best interest of the child for even an unwed mother to keep and raise the child. Some adopted children really struggle with the fact that their birth parents gave them away. So if the grandparents are able and willing to give financial support and their time to help raise the child, then that can work out acceptably well for the child. If the birth father forsakes the child, an involved grandfather can substitute as a father figure. I would add that an unmarried woman who desires to keep her child should make a commitment to the well-being of her child above her own desires and interests. If you are not willing to make that commitment, you need to consider adoption.

We should also support those who are working to make a positive contribution to the protection of human life on a local level. Every time you give to support our church, you are also giving support to the Pregnancy Support Center of the Tri-Cities. In 2016 our church gave over \$2,000 to support this ministry. They offer confidential and free pregnancy testing and counseling to those who are facing the possibility of a problem pregnancy. Through their efforts hundreds of children have been saved from the abortionists. You should also consider volunteering your time to our local crisis pregnancy center.

C. Speak Out and Vote for Pro-life Candidates - Jesus said to His disciples, “You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:14). Isa. 58:1 says, “Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression....” Abortion is wrong. It is the shedding of innocent

blood. We must speak the truth about it. Prov. 24:11-12 says, “Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’ Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it?....” And since we have the right of free speech, and since we can participate in the political process, then we have even more reason to speak out against the taking of innocent human life.

One function of government is to protect the poor and the oppressed, the weak and the helpless. If we believe the unborn are persons, and we have shown that they are, then we believe that the government should protect them. And if the government is failing in its role, then we have the right to petition our government to fulfill its role.

What should we do then? It seems that one of the best ways to guarantee that government fulfills the role of protecting the helpless, unborn children of this country is through passage of a constitutional amendment concerning the right to life for the unborn. But you say, “Why is this needed?” Well even though the 5th and 14th amendments state that a person cannot be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, the Supreme Court has gotten around that by declaring that the unborn are not “persons.” The same argument was used in 1857 to deny slaves the most fundamental human rights, declaring them to be property, not persons. So it boils down to a matter of broad and loose interpretation on the part of the High Court. So we should encourage our legislators to pass a constitutional amendment to protect the unborn. They need to put moral principles above party affiliation and the pursuit of reelection. If they don’t pass such legislation, they will answer to God someday!

Yet a constitutional amendment is difficult to pass. So every election of a President and Senator is very important to gain protections for the unborn, especially after the first trimester. We need to elect presidents who will sign legislation to protect the unborn from partial birth abortion. We also need to elect a president who will appoint judges to the Supreme Court who will protect life, and at least affirm reasonable restrictions on abortion. Perhaps we can even get enough pro-life judges on the Supreme Court who will reject previous interpretations of the Constitution that made abortion the so-called “law of the land,” even though Congress never passed such a law and the Constitution certainly does not require the legalization of abortion.<sup>2</sup> So it is very important for Christians to vote. Too many Christians do not bother to vote.

Of course, there are other pro-life issues. Video games, movies, and television contribute to a culture of violence and death. Parents need to do their job, and restrict the amount of violent material that their children are exposed to. We need to help put pressure to bear upon the entertainment industry, who consistently put profits ahead of the moral interests of our nation.

Conclusion: It is certainly possible that my message may have disturbed someone who has had an abortion. While I do not minimize the seriousness of abortion morally, I must remind you that God is willing and ready to forgive, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Jesus died on the cross for that sin. Would you agree with me that three of the greatest men in the Bible are Moses, King David and the apostle Paul? Did you know that Moses was guilty of the killing of an Egyptian? David was guilty of ordering the death of Uriah. Paul was guilty of the killing of Christians. Yet look at your Bible. The first five books of your Bible were written by Moses. Most of your Psalms

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<sup>2</sup> By the way, the word “privacy” is not found in the Constitution, and the only time the word “private” is found is in reference to private *property*. Then the 4<sup>th</sup> amendment says that both we and our property should be secure from “unreasonable searches and seizures.” That protects you from the government forcing you to have an abortion but it doesn’t give you the right to have one! In the court decision the right to privacy is also claimed based on the First, Ninth, and Fourteenth amendments, based on the right of liberty.

were composed by David. Perhaps half of your New Testament was written by Paul. They all had committed murder, but oh, dear friends, they had been saved by the grace of God. So I have good news for you. You can be saved and you can be forgiven. God's grace is greater than our sin (Rom. 5:20). All you need to do is to repent of what you have done, confess it as sin, and turn to Jesus for forgiveness. When He forgives, He casts your sin into the sea of forgetfulness (Micah 7:19).

Sources: E.J. Daniels, *Abortion! America's Holocaust* (article published from Orlando, FL); Larry Lewis, *What the Bible Teaches about Abortion*; Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 4:23] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2012); Ike Reighard (a few notes from his message entitled, "The Demand of Command," 2/20/1994); Dr. Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon on Ex. 20:13). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).