

**“God’s Priority of Human Life”
Matthew 18:1-14**

Big Idea – God values human life from the womb to the tomb.

What priority do you place on human life? What is the worth of a life? To help us answer this question consider these facts:

The first to be killed in Nazi Germany were the infirm, the senile and mentally retarded, the aged and defective children. Eventually, as World War II approached, the doomed undesirables included epileptics, children with badly mottled ears and even bed-wetters. Transportation of patients to killing centers was carried out by "The Charitable Transport Company for the Sick." The plan then was to kill all Jews and Poles and to cut down the Russian Population by 30,000,000.

We're all struck by this great Holocaust and wonder how it ever could have happened. Leo Alexander, who was consultant to the Secretary of War and on duty with the office of Chief Counselor for War Crimes in Nuremberg, says what happened in Nazi Germany "all started with the acceptance of the attitude that there is such a thing as life not worthy to be lived."

An elderly German man who lived through the Holocaust tells the following sad, true story:

“I always considered myself a Christian. I attended a church since I was a small boy. We had heard the stories of what was happening to the Jews; but like most people in America today, we tried to distance ourselves from the reality of what was really taking place. What could anyone do to stop it?

A railroad track ran behind our small church, and each Sunday morning we would hear the whistle from a distance and then the clacking of the wheels moving over the track. We became disturbed when one Sunday we heard cries coming from the train as it passed by. We grimly realized that the train was carrying Jews.

Week after week that train whistle would blow. We would dread to hear the sound of those old wheels because we knew that the Jews would begin to cry out to us as they passed our church. It was so terribly disturbing! We could do nothing to help these poor people, yet their screams tormented us. We knew

exactly at what time that whistle would blow, and we decided the only way to keep from being so disturbed by the cries was to start singing our hymns. If some of the screams reached our ears, we'd just sing a little louder until we could hear them no more.

Years have passed, and no one talks about it much any more; but I still hear that train whistle in my sleep. I can still hear them crying out for help. God forgive all of us who called ourselves Christians yet did nothing to intervene."

Does this sound like the United States in 2023 — are we tempted to just "sing a little louder"?

Notice, it all began with "the attitude that there is such a thing as a life not worthy to be lived." That sounds a lot like today's thinking. Ninety percent of expectant parents who receive a prenatal diagnosis of Down's syndrome will abort their baby! A life not worthy to be lived?

What that's really saying is that God goofed, He must've been distracted or tired when He created that particular life, maybe not paying real close attention. Is that the way God views the people He creates?

God is the Creator, the Giver, the Originator of life – Genesis 1

Genesis 1: 26 "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

The unique characteristic of each human being is being created "in His image." Each of us reflects the very image of God. How? Mankind alone has intellect, emotion, and will, and the desire to worship someone or something higher than himself.

Job, even in the midst of his afflictions, notes that God created him to live.

Job 27: 3 :As long as I live, while I have breath from God,"

Paul speaking to the men of Athens, a great Greek city, notes that God is the giver of life

Acts 17: 24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

25 "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

Psalms 139:13 You made my whole being; you formed me in my mother's body.

14 I praise you because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way.

15 You saw my bones being formed as I took shape in my mother's body. When I was put together there,

16 you saw my body as it was formed. All the days planned for me were written in your book before I was one day old.

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Isaiah 44:24 "This is what the LORD says, who saved you, who formed you in your mother's body: "I, the LORD, made everything..."

When we lose sight of a Creator who has formed us with a purposeful life in mind, we can devalue life and even be willing to destroy it. The Roman Coliseum is a monument to the degradation a culture or society will experience when it does not recognize that humans are created to live.

Abortion and euthanasia are only symptoms of a greater problem: our culture no longer recognizes the sacredness of human life

Here's what 30 years of Roe v. Wade has inflicted on the American culture: The homicide rate for infants -- children under one year of age -- is now virtually equal to the murder rate among teenagers.

A study by Child Trends showed a steady 30-year rise in the infanticide rate.

It's no coincidence that this increase coincided with the legalization of abortion-on-demand for any reason at any stage of pregnancy right up to the very moment of birth. The devaluation of human life in the abortion culture cannot be expected to stop magically at birth.

Thirty years ago, the Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer predicted that legalized abortion would have a dehumanizing effect on all society. The rise in the infant homicide rate is sad confirmation he was right.

God saved His breath for the creation of human beings.

Genesis 2:7 says, "the Lord God...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being."

We are created in the image of God and endowed with His very breath to live. That is sacred.

If we lose sight of the value placed on human life, we are susceptible to the temptation to destroy that life designed by God. Life is sacred. When life is destroyed, we lose the impact of a life that could have enriched our lives and brought glory to God.

The movie, It's A Wonderful Life, allows a man to see what the world would have missed if he had not been born.

A college professor presented this challenging situation for his ethics class to consider. "A man has syphilis and his wife has tuberculosis. They have four children. One has died; the other three have terminal illnesses. The mother is pregnant again. What do you recommend?" The class voted to terminate the pregnancy. The professor noted they had just killed Beethoven.

Ethel Waters, the great gospel singer, was born to a 13-year-old child who had been raped. The world would have been robbed of the wonderful sacred music provided by each of these individuals if life had not been valued even under difficult circumstances.

Principles that come from this:

Only human beings can fellowship with the Creator. Genesis 1:26-27.

Only man is crowned by God with glory and majesty. Psalm 8:4-5.

Only God should determine life's beginning and end. Psalm 139:16.

Here, the question is often asked, "What if the mother's life is in danger? Shouldn't she have an abortion then?" Dr. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the United States says that during his more than 35 years of medical practice in obstetrics, "Never once did a case come across my practice where abortion was necessary to save a mother's life."

And at the other end of life, when, loved ones have illnesses diagnosed as terminal and are perhaps in great pain, Christian doctors who view God as the giver and taker of life can become very skilled in pain management to alleviate that suffering.

Even though the circumstances may not make sense from our view, we are never "authorized" to "play God," to usurp the position that is rightfully His by practicing euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Psalm 23:4 "...though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

2 Corinthians 12:9 "Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.

10 That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

God loves the little children.

Mark 10:13 "One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him."

Jesus took the children in His arms, blessed them and warned those who might attempt to prevent them from coming to Jesus there would be consequences.

Matthew 18:6 "If one of these little children believes in me, and someone causes that child to sin, it would be better for that person to have a large stone tied around the neck and be drowned in the sea."

Life should be consecrated to fulfill God's purposes for it.

Life is sacred. Our lives are a trust from God and therefore should be dedicated and lived to achieve His divine purpose. The music of our lives should be offered as an act of worship to our God the Creator. Life is a sacred trust.

Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus

Ephesians 2:10 "we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God **prepared in advance for us to do.**"

Psalm 139:16b "All the days planned for me were written in your book before I was one day old."

Purpose for life is found in knowing God and doing His plan.

Jeremiah 1:5 "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations."

Jeremiah, the prophet, noted that God knew him completely before he was born.

The Psalmist in Psalm 138:8 declared, "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; . . ."

Peter challenged the church 1 Peter 2:16 "...to live as servants of God."

In his book *Sanctity of Life*, Chuck Swindoll tells the story of a couple who married during the Great Depression when the man was middle-aged, and she was in her twenties. Exactly 10 months after their wedding day, their first child was born — a baby boy. Times were tough, but they managed fairly well. Before their second anniversary, along came a second child, this time a girl. Their hands were certainly full with this addition!

And then, lo and behold, in January long before their fourth anniversary the following October, the mother conceived her third child, even though they were using contraceptives. The other two children were, obviously, still in diapers. Finances were very challenging. The mother's health was not good, and understandably she was tired all the time. She didn't especially enjoy young children to begin with; she was depressed.

The pressures were so great that it would've been easy to consider seeking out someone, who could perform an abortion, even though they were illegal. However, this couple was convinced that they should accept whatever God had sovereignly planned for them. In spite of the circumstances, they chose to trust God and have that baby in October of 1934.

That baby was Charles R. Swindoll, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, pastor for many years and pre-eminent teacher of the Word. He was his parents' last child. All three of those children are today in vocational Christian service.

No one, certainly not his parents, knew at that time what God's plan for him, or his siblings, would be. But they knew God, and they fully believed that He was greater than their rights, their plans or their inconveniences.

That God has not changed. Whether at the beginning of life, at the end or any point in between, His timing is perfect, His plan is detailed and His provision unmatched.