

## PROVIDENCE CHURCH

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### **Unleashing the Power of the Truth – Part I**

**Pastor Ty Blackburn**

**John 8:31-36**

**January 18, 2015**

Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 8. I know I told you we weren't going to be expositing John, we're just going to be using this passage as a point of departure for a topical message. Thursday, January 22, 2015, will make the 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision, Roe vs. Wade, which legalized abortion on demand in the United States. In those 42 years it is estimated that more than 56 million babies have been aborted in American wombs. That is something that is around us that is overwhelming when you really stop to think about it. And the implications, I mean all the children that are lost, but all the women, and men too, but particularly those mothers that have aborted their children, the scars, the wounds, so much need.

I want us to look at, as we consider this idea of the power of the truth, and how we make a difference. I often think about the verses in Psalm 11, especially when I've been watching the news I'll sometimes think this. You know, do you ever watch the news to the point where you're like, "I can't take any more"? You listen to talk radio and you get discouraged and down. Everything is going down. Psalm 11, where David quotes someone who has been counseling him, he says, "How can you say to my soul, 'Flee as a bird to your mountain.'?" Somebody is telling him, "You just need to flee. You need to get away," and then the person continues, "When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" And David says, after he's quoted that person who says, "Flee as a bird to the mountain. When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? There is nothing that you can do. Just run for it!" The next words David says is, "The Lord is in His holy temple." What we need to do is remember who God is. We need to remember who God is ourselves, and we need to declare who God is to others, because no matter how much of a mess people find themselves in, if they will set their hearts upon God, He will heal them, fix them, change them.

So we need to understand how to do that as people are overwhelmed by the darkness. And we can find ourselves, as we were talking about the last couple of weeks, the idea of being transformed by the renewing of your mind, is not being conformed to this world, Romans 2:2. Don't be conformed to this world, be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The world exerts a pressure to conform us, to shape us according to its design, and in its mold. And the way that we are to

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be transformed is to continually renew our minds, to think God's thoughts after Him, and to be changed from within. And as we change from within, and we walk in godliness, then we can speak that same truth that transforms to others. And for Christians, we see them grow in grace, and for unbelievers we can see them come to faith, and have eternal life, to move from darkness to light.

So I'm going to consider, and right now my plan is to do three weeks, in sort of preparing our minds for the issues we are facing today in American culture, so that we're not conformed, but we are being transformed, and we're being agents for transformation in knowing how to speak the truth to the culture. The three issues I want to talk about, topical messages, are our response to the issue of abortion, next Sunday the issue of homosexuality, and the agenda of homosexuality, and then finally the issue of militant Islam. What does God's word say about these things, and how we should think, and how we should live, and how we should relate to others? These are areas that cause consternation. They can make you feel like you want to flee as a bird to your mountain, but in reality we don't need to do that. We need to prepare our minds for action, to use the weapons of our warfare that are mighty through God. It said '*divinely powerful*' but really in the Greek it says, '*mighty through God*', '*powerful through God*', '*God's power*'. Use those weapons and watch Him work.

So today we want to look at this issue of abortion. Now I want to read another passage of Scripture which speaks to the power of the truth, and helps us to see that in reality, whenever we're talking to someone, say we're talking to someone who is a strong advocate of abortion, or we're talking to someone who is a strong advocate of the homosexual agenda, or we're talking to someone who is a Muslim, and has an intense desire to see Islam extend its influence over the world. No matter who we are talking to in that agenda, what is really going on? We have the power of God and the Gospel, and what we need to understand is that what the person needs more than anything else is to come into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We need to proclaim Christ, and this passage in John 8:31-36 helps us see how Jesus dealt with people when He saw opposition. In Verse 31:

***John 8:31-36 ~ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits***

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***sin is the slave of sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.***

Really every encounter with an unbeliever is basically an opportunity for that person to be set free by the power of God, by coming to know Jesus Christ. That no matter what their position is, really what is going is spiritual bondage. Now they don't think they're slaves, do they? The Jews didn't even think they were slaves, and certainly no one thinks they are a slave. They think they are doing what they want to do. They think they are free. But the Bible says, as Jesus said here, "Everyone who sins is a slave of sin." They are the slaves of sin. They need to be set free, and we have the power to set them free in the truth of God's word. So the title of the message is going to be 'Unleashing the Power of the Truth'. Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank You for Your word. We thank You that it is that which calls the world to come into existence. You spoke, Lord, that's how You created. It was Your word You sent forth that framed the heavens. It was Your word that You sent forth that separated the waters from the dry land. It was Your word that You sent forth that caused the waters to team with all kinds of fish and animals. It was Your word which You sent forth that formed man out of the dust of the earth. And we thank You that it is Your word that You send forth now that takes those who were dead and makes them alive. We ask that the power of Your word would be unveiled in our hearts even this morning, and that You would help us to be changed into the likeness of Your Son, the Lord Jesus. And we pray in His name, Amen.*

'Unleashing the Power of the Truth – Part I', related to the issue of abortion. I was reading a book on the Gospel not too long ago, in which this author was commenting on the fact that, you know if you think about all throughout Scripture, God talks about lots of amazing things that He has made. But He says there is nothing that in the Bible is said to be the power of God except the Gospel. I mean, that is something to stop and think about. You could think that, well, you know, look at a tornado. Look at the incredible force of a tornado like we saw in Oklahoma, that one that was over a mile wide, and just demolished everything. Is that an example of the power of God? Does a tornado contain the power of God? Or you could think about the brilliant power of the sun, the radiating power of the sun that gives life. Is that the power of God? The Bible nowhere says that the sun is the power of God, the sun, s-u-n. But the Bible says the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It says it twice, the Gospel is the power of God. So we have

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the incredible power of God when we share the good news of Jesus Christ. So our goal is to have more opportunities to share with people who are in darkness, who are in bondage, who need to be set free, and we have the power available, not in ourselves, but in the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

So we're going to look at this idea of 'Unleashing the Power of the Truth' to those who are in bondage, particularly in the area of their thoughts and their lives related to abortion. I've got two major points this morning. We'll spend most of the time on the second point, but the first is, and the idea we're going to be looking at, as we look at these three messages, the plan is to think about how we communicate the truth. How do we actually make an impact? How do we deliver the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation? So the two points this morning, first of all, we must *Create a Context for the Truth*, and secondly, we just need to *Speak the Truth*. So create a context and then speak it.

### 1) Create a Context for the Truth:

The first point, create a context for the truth, and basically the idea here is that an undergirding principle that you see in Scripture is that God always communicates truth in the context of a relationship. It is really something to ponder, and consider. For instance, you know God inaugurates the covenant with the Nation of Israel after the Exodus. He gives them His laws, He speaks the truth of who He is, He tells them what He expects of them, but He does that after He delivers them, not before. He doesn't come and tell them what they need to be before He delivers them. He delivers them, and when you read Exodus, you see this relational outreach of God. Remember what Moses hears from the Lord, as the Lord speaks to him through the burning bush? God says, "I have seen the affliction of My people. I have heard the cries of their hearts by reason of their taskmasters, and I have come down to deliver them." So God sees, hears, comes down, delivers them, and then He communicates truth. That is the pattern. We respond to the work of God in building that relationship and that is a principle that we need to model as well. That's why the Bible says, "Speak the truth in love."

So the idea of creating a context is that if you want the truth to go forth in a Godlike way, in a godly way, what you want to do is to do everything you can to establish a relationship. Now I'm not saying you wait until you establish a relationship to speak the truth. You know, "I'm going to wait. I'm going to talk to this person. I'm going to be friends with them for ten years and then I'm going to tell them." No, no, not at all. You can work to establish a relationship, and talk

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about the truth in a two-minute conversation. You can deliver the truth, but you can be intentionally relational as you do so. That is what I'm talking about. Be intentionally relational, create a context for the truth. And one of the first things that we need to do when we are encountering someone, and want to talk about Christ, or particularly I'm talking about when you realize there is an opportunity to talk about an issue. You know, a lot of times what we do is we react in the moment, and we don't prepare our hearts for the conversation, and we just think, "I've got to say something. I've got to say something," and we know we have the truth, and we know that they're blind, and so we just rush on ahead, and we don't do it in a circumspect way, and we don't accomplish what we could. Sometimes we just close communication very quickly.

### A) Pray:

So how can we do that? Well the first thing we need to do, I think there are three things that we could do every time we try to have a conversation, to create a context for the truth. The first thing is pray. It's so obvious, isn't it? Isn't it amazing how much we forget that though? The first thing we do is pray. "Lord, here is an opportunity for me to talk to this person. I need You. Help me. I'm looking to You to give me the words to say, the heart for this person," and you start the dialogue, and the whole thing becomes Godward. Now what you are doing is you have created the context where you are not walking independently, you're not a branch of a vine that is not abiding in the vine, just laying on the ground. You know, pick up a branch and just try to see what you can do with that branch to bless someone. No, Jesus says, "Abide in the vine." So you reconnect with the Lord through prayer. Don't get discouraged by what you are hearing. You know it may be an opportunity where you're hearing somebody at the coffee shop, or a family gathering, and someone is going off about a woman's right to choose, and that's where you feel like, "I'd like to run away. Flee as a bird to my mountain. Or I'd like to just try to... Can't they get it? How can they be so clueless?" The first thing to do is pray. "Wait a minute, Lord. I need You," and I start setting context.

### B) Put off Pride and Put on Humility:

The second thing is we need to put off pride, and put on humility. We need to put off pride and put on humility. One of the problems that we have that hinders our communication with others, and the communication of the Gospel, and communication related to issues is that we're proud. We tend to be proud. It is a vestige of our former, the old man, the sin nature.



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We were talking the other day, I think it was men's Bible study, or sometime after it. You know we are a Reformed Baptist Church, that is that we believe in the Doctrines of Grace. We believe that the Bible teaches that God is sovereign in salvation. Even though the offer of the Gospel is to everyone, and God offers salvation to everyone, yet there is a sense in which His divine election is what makes it happen when someone is saved. And we were talking about this, and someone was sharing about a conversation, and as you start talking about that, you know, I think, I remember when I was wrestling with that in seminary, that issue, and I was a convinced non-Calvinist at that point, and non-reformed. I was at a Reformed Seminary, it was kind of a bad decision on my part to go to Reformed Seminary. I was always having dialogues and discussions about this, and everybody was against me, a kind of circle around Ty of my buddies, you know? But I was convinced, I wasn't going to believe it just because the people I respected believed it, and there were lots of people that I respected that believed it at seminary, and people like Charles Spurgeon, and Jonathan Edwards, all throughout history, Luther, Calvin.

But anyway, I was going to look to the Bible, and so I kept working on it, and three and a half years later I finally agreed with them, that that is what the Bible taught. I joke, my wife was much quicker to realize it than I was, and I was like upset with her for taking it so quickly. "You can't just change your position like that. You've got to think this through." So eventually I came around, but one of the things that hit me is coming around to that position, it is amazing how quick you can then become proud that you now understand something that you didn't formerly, and a person you are talking to you can look down upon. And it ought to be an oxymoron, it is an oxymoron, proud Calvinist. The Doctrines of Grace teach that we would know nothing unless God graciously gave it to us. We have nothing, I mean it's not our cleverness that has led us to understand anything of God. It is His condescending grace, and so that everything that we understand today that we didn't understand yesterday, is a token of His grace, and is a reason for praise, and a reason for utter and complete humility. What do you have, remember what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4, "What do you have that you did not receive? Why then do you act as though you did not receive it?" You act as though you came into the world, that you have it of yourself, that you made it yourself. Whatever we have is by the grace of God, so when it comes to an issue like abortion, where we as Christians are looking at things biblically, we have a very clear perception of the issue, and it seems so black and white. How can they miss it?

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One of the things we've got to watch out for—beware of pride. What do you have that you did not receive? The only reason I understand this is because God has graciously condescended to enlighten my eyes, and this person that I'm arguing with has not yet received that grace. And remembering where we were, and what we are, and what we've done, and that every sin is heinous before the sight of God, and in reality, we're going to see as we look at this, the truth about abortion, the Bible teaches it is killing a human being, it is murder. But in reality, every one of us are murderers. Jesus said, "If you've ever been angry, and sinned in anger, you have committed murder," Matthew 5. If you ever called someone a fool, an empty-head, you are guilty of murder. Which one of us can say we've not done that? I shudder to think of how many times I've had that kind of thought, and we can have that kind of thought, isn't it ironic? Talking to someone about an issue like this, we can be doing the very sin that we're trying to stop them from doing. We want them not to murder, and yet we, by treating them as a fool, or in our minds looking down upon them, thinking them as an empty-head, we are murdering them in our hearts. How can God work through that? So humility is essential. What do we have that we did not receive?

This is why Paul says in Romans 2, "When you find yourself condemning someone, when you find yourself condemning," and the idea of that, the word there in Romans 2 is '*judging down, passing judgment on*'. There is a difference between speaking the truth and saying, "This is sin," and the Bible is clear, we're supposed to do that. We're supposed to love each other enough to speak the truth and say, "Listen, this is not good. This is not right. This is not what God wants. This is sin." But it is different than that if you are saying, "You," and you are judging the person kind of from up here. But when you remember that you are a murderer, how can we possibly be judging? What Paul says in Romans 2 is, "If you find yourself condemning someone, know that you are practicing the very same thing even as you condemn them. That's why you are condemning them." When you take a judgmental spirit, when I take a judgmental spirit towards someone, I am just validating the fact that this sin is in me. So we need to put on humility. So we need to pray, secondly, put off pride, put on humility.

### C) Put Off Self-Interest or Selfishness and Put on Love:

Thirdly, put off selfish interests and put on love. This is creating a context, three sub-points under this first point, *Create a Context for the Truth*. First, pray. Secondly, put off pride, put on humility. Thirdly, put off self-interest, or selfishness, and put on love. Matthew 7:1-5, a very familiar passage. One of the

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most quoted verses probably in the Bible is Verse 1, and you might get this in your, this is one of the verses that so many people have memorized, so many unbelievers. Matthew 7:1, they don't know where it is, but they've memorized it.

***Matthew 7:1 ~ "Do not judge so that you will not be judged.***

Right? "Don't judge or you'll be judged. The Bible says it somewhere," but they don't read it in context. It does mean do not judge so that you will not be judged, don't judge down, the same way where Paul was talking about in Romans 2, but look what He says.

***Matthew 7:1-2 ~ "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. 2 For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.***

And then He says, and He used an illustration:

***Matthew 7:3-5 ~ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.***

Now that is a humorous picture. Jesus says, "How can you look at somebody and say, 'Hey, I see something wrong in your eye. There is a speck there. Let me get it,' and you've got a board over your own?" I mean, would you want somebody to be messing with your eye? I mean, that is something you wouldn't want anybody to do anyway, but especially somebody that can't see themselves. And so He says, "You hypocrite. You are looking at a speck in your brother's eye, and you've got this log in your own!" But He doesn't say, "Don't deal with the speck," does He? That is the whole point. You are supposed to deal with the speck, but you're supposed to deal with the log first. Verse 5:

***Matthew 7:5 ~ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.***

The idea is, we are supposed to speak the truth to one another, and we are supposed to confront one another when we see sin. Lovingly, but we're to do it



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humbly. We're supposed to get our hearts right, and deal with our own sin first. So this has to happen, and this can happen just in a few seconds as we are talking to someone. Where we're praying, "Lord, help me not to be proud," remember? "I just know what I know because of Your grace. And Lord, help me not to be about my own selfish interests, but about Yours. Help me not to be irritated with this person."

A lot of times, I think, one of the problems we have with issues like homosexuality, or abortion, or other issues like that is that our own self-interest is at stake in that we are mad that people are messing up our country. We have this idea of wanting to take America back and we see these kind of issues as things that are potentially going to, are destroying America, and so our selfish interest then makes us angry, and the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God, James tells us. And if we really put things biblically, we don't have any self-interest. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, the Bible says that you are a slave of Jesus Christ. Paul's favorite way to refer to himself, '*a slave of Jesus Christ*'. To be a follower of Christ you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him. "Deny yourself, become My slave, become My follower." And so a slave has no rights of his own, he has no will of his own, he has no interest of his own. He only does the will of his master. So that means I don't have any interest in what happens in America, and if we are thinking biblically, we know this on several different levels. Where is your citizenship?

Are we not told that we are strangers and aliens just passing through this world? This isn't our home, so don't act like it is our home when we talk to other people. It's all up to God. What does He want to do with America? America is not His country. It just is not. There is nothing biblical about this idea. Yes, God in His grace, His common grace, allowed biblical principles to be more in the foundation of America, I think, than any country in history, yes, but there is also a lot of Paganism mixed into the foundation of America as well. And the fact that it was good in 1776 doesn't mean it is good today anyway. So that doesn't matter. We are citizens of the Kingdom, so the issue isn't America, it is not that you are destroying my country. You can't destroy my country. I want, like Abraham, I'm looking for a heavenly country where moth and rust do not corrupt, where thieves don't break in and steal. I'm laying up treasure there. That's my home. So we don't need to worry about it. So we have no dog in the fight so to speak. So when we come to the issue, it is now just the Kingdom of God and the glory of God, and this person in need who is in bondage like we once were. Exactly in the same place we once were, and but for the grace of God would we be today, or worse. So we put off

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selfishness, and then we are able to put on love. “I don’t have anything here. Lord, fill me with Your love for this person. Help me see them the way You see them.”

I love that passage in Matthew 9, when Jesus looks at the crowds, what did He see? He looked at the crowds and He felt compassion for them. He looked at the crowds, these people have all these crazy ideas, these crazy beliefs. I mean, I don’t know what they looked like then, they might have had, you know, I think about people you see today, they’ve got like crazy Mohawks, sprayed Mohawks or whatever, walking around, body piercings everywhere, and sometimes it’s that obvious that this person is not like me, right? Can you imagine if I came in the pulpit with a Mohawk? Somebody come get me down. It could not be a good indication. Anyway, Jesus looked at the crowds and He saw people, like we might see people, walking through the streets of Atlanta, or walking through the Mall of Georgia. He saw people who were all messed up, but what He felt wasn’t irritation, or anger that they are messing things up. If anyone had a right to be upset about someone messing up their stuff, isn’t it the Creator of the world? I mean, they are messing up what really does belong to Him, but He doesn’t feel this kind of anger and rage. I mean, God is holy and His wrath is there, yes, but His first impulse is compassion. This is the heart of who God is. He is a God of mercy and compassion, and if you will bow before Him, you will experience His mercy and compassion. If you won’t, you’ll experience His wrath.

But Jesus looked at the crowd and He felt compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. That’s a good image. They were like sheep without a shepherd. Of course they’re like that. What would a sheep without a shepherd look like? What would you expect? That’s so helpful. Don’t be surprised that people are a mess. We would be just the same, but they don’t have a shepherd. What do they need? They need to meet Jesus. That’s the only thing that can change them. So put off selfishness and put on love. That’s creating a context for the truth, and this should happen as a part of our discipline in our everyday life. It ought to happen in a few instances of silent prayer. As we’re preparing our minds and walking in the truth, this is the way that we ought to deal with life. We ought to be praying, remembering to put on our humility, put off our pride, put off our selfishness, put on love, and now we’re ready to speak. Secondly, after creating a context for the truth, we speak the truth.

### 2) We Speak the Truth:

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Here we want to first of all talk about the truth about abortion, from God's word. The Bible is very clear on this. I mean, the Bible is very clear on everything that we need clarity on. We as Christians believe that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, sufficient. As 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, the word of God is God-breathed, and is profitable...

***2 Timothy 3:16 ~ All Scripture is inspired by God (God-breathed) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;***

It's God-breathed, that what is written was breathed out by God, and everything that is written in the Scriptures was breathed out by God. It's all perfect. It's perfect to teach us, to correct us, to instruct us, to change us, and then it goes on to say in Verse 17:

***2 Timothy 3:17 ~ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped (thoroughly furnished) for every good work.***

It's sufficient, so that if we have the word of God, we have everything that we need, and certainly we have everything we need in relation to this issue of abortion. As we come to this, we need to also have compassion in this particular issue, because the plague of abortion affects nearly all of us. The statistics say that by the time a woman is 45, almost one in three women will have had an abortion in present society. In America, one in four pregnancies ends in abortion. Isn't that amazing? So this means that in a room this size, that there are people probably that have had abortions, there may be men who were in relationships where you encouraged someone to have an abortion or you didn't stop it, or families that have experienced this. So this is something that the scars of this are all around us, and that's why we need that sensitivity and compassion, but we also need the truth. We need to be clear in speaking the truth, because the truth is what sets you free, and the truth of the Gospel is such that God tells you the bad news before He tells you the good news. The truth about abortion is that it is murder. That's the bad news. God's word tells us. Let me give you three different things, three principles from Scripture.

According to the Bible, God creates every child that is conceived, by an act of His own special creation. Now, this is important, because we tend to think as the world thinks, and as we observe things, we develop thought patterns, and it's very common to think that the world just operates on its own according to natural law,

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so that conception just happens, right? That's kind of how we think, but according to the Scripture, when someone conceives, it's because God has granted conception, that it's an act of His creation, actively creating. The problem is we have way too low a view of God. We think He's much smaller than He is. The biblical picture is that He's doing everything, that He's much greater than we ever imagined, that in Him we live, and move, and have our being, that He gives life and breath to all creatures. He actively does that. So when conception happens, God causes that conception. You see this in a number of places in the Old Testament.

### *Psalm 127:3 ~ Behold, children are a gift of the Lord,...*

When a child is conceived, God has given a gift. But you also see as you read through Genesis, the first book of the Bible, that conception and birth are in the hand of God. Remember Sarah is barren. That's the problem, and when does she conceive? She conceives when the Lord comes and promises that she will conceive, and causes her to conceive. But you remember that before she conceives, remember Abraham had a problem lying about Sarah. He was afraid. He was prone to fear, and she was a pretty woman, and so a couple of times when he'd go into a new area, when he went to Egypt, he lied and said she was his sister, remember? Pharaoh took her as his wife.

Then some years later, actually after the promise of having a child, in Genesis 20, he goes into the region of Abimelech and he reverts to that same sin. He says, "She's my sister," and Abimelech takes her into his house, though he doesn't take her as his wife. He doesn't have relations with her, but he takes her into his house, and the Bible says that immediately God closed every womb of every woman in the house of Abimelech. And then God meets Abimelech in a dream and basically tells him (I'm paraphrasing), "You are dead meat," and Abimelech's like, "I didn't do anything wrong. Abraham lied. I didn't do anything wrong," and God says, "You ask Abraham to pray for you," and he says, "I haven't touched her." God says, "I haven't allowed you to touch her." That's how sovereign He is.

Abimelech repents, Abraham blesses him, God opens the wombs of the women in Abimelech's house, and then not long after that, God opens the womb of Sarah and she gives birth. In 1 Samuel 1, we're told about Hannah, and the Bible uses this language, "The Lord had shut up her womb." That's why she didn't have children. After she prayed, the Lord opened her womb, and she had a son, Samuel.

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Isaac's wife Rebekah wasn't able to conceive, so he prayed, and we read in Samuel 1:20 that the Lord blessed her and allowed her to conceive. He remembered her, and it came to pass that she conceived and bore two sons. So the Lord is the one who causes conception, according to Scripture.

Not only that, but the Lord is the one, this first point, God creates, that every child that is conceived and developed is a special creation of God. That's the first principle. And the development is the special work of God. Turn to Psalm 139, a familiar passage, but we need to see these verses. In Verse 13 of this psalm of David, he says to the Lord:

### *Psalm 139*

- 13** *For You formed my inward parts;  
You wove me in my mother's womb.*
- 14** *I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Your works,  
And my soul knows it very well.*
- 15** *My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;*
- 16** *Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;*

He's saying that as the embryo was developing in David's mother's womb, as David was developing, his body was being knit together. God was doing it. And again, this is the picture that the Lord gives us of His sovereignty. Let me just say really quickly something that helped me to understand this concept. I encourage you to read more, and I'm going to just talk about it for a minute or two, but this idea of how big God is versus kind of our natural law sort of mindset that many of us have grown up thinking about. We think that things operate according to the natural laws of the universe, that gravity, if I drop something, it's going to fall because of the law of gravity. We use phrases like, "The law of..." right? But in reality, science is showing that there really are no natural laws, that though we observe that things seem to work a certain way, and if you do certain things, certain things tend to follow, that in reality God is so intimately involved that He's making it happen.



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One of the areas that you see this is in the area of the understanding of subatomic particles. I remember a lecture I had at the Reformed Seminary where I was that I mentioned earlier, where one of my professors was talking about this concept, that the revolution that had happened in the last hundred years in relation to atomic theory, and quantum mechanics, and to sum it down in a layman's terms, the idea is that at the building blocks of matter, the things that make up the atoms, when you go down smaller, and smaller, and smaller, what you find is not order, but chaos, utter and complete chaos. And the people who are really studying physics, this is what has happened particularly in the last 50 years, is they're asking the question: Why does anything hold together? We look at it and there's no reason that an atom should coalesce. We do not understand why it's holding together, because at the building blocks, it's all randomness. It's out of control, a chaos.

Many in the area of physics have come to search for some kind of spiritual meaning, because the reality is what the Bible has always said, that in Christ all things consist or hold together, that Jesus Christ is holding together the atoms in your body, that if He were not, you would blow apart. He's holding the planets in their orbit by the word of His power, as it says in Hebrews 1:3. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He's that sovereign.

So when He says in Job, "I'm the one that tells the mountain goats when to give birth," He's involved in the mountain goats giving birth. He feeds the birds. God is so much bigger. We can't think like that. We think, "If I have to do something, I can only do one thing at a time." But the God of Heaven does all these things at the same time. So when He says He causes conception, He causes conception, and He also develops the baby in the womb. He knits each one together.

Great implications for the things that we don't like about ourselves, we need to learn to give thanks. "You made me. I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. I'm made the way You wanted me to be, Lord. I might have changed this or that, but You do all things well. You know best." Praise Him. Well, if it's a creative act of God then, that changes the way that we see this decision to terminate a pregnancy. But the second point is, not only has God created every child that is conceived and developing in the womb, but He also sees every child conceived and developing in the womb as a distinct person. It is not a part of the woman's body. It's in the woman's body, but it is a separate and distinct person. David said in that verse:

***Psalm 139:16 ~ Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;...***

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He's saying, "You knew me in my mother's womb. It wasn't that you were looking at some cells that might eventually become a person. You were looking at me as a person." In Jeremiah 1:5, God says to Jeremiah:

***Jeremiah 1:5 ~ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,..."***

God says to Jeremiah, "I formed you in your mother's womb. I knew you in your mother's womb." Do you see that? It's very clear. When did God enter the world in the Person of Christ, when He was born, or when He was conceived? It was when He was conceived. Remember the story in Luke 1. Right after Mary conceives, John the Baptist has been conceived and Mary doesn't know about it, but her cousin Elizabeth is an older woman, and again, has not conceived any children. And she and her husband Zechariah are both really beyond the ages of childbearing, without children, and the Lord appears to Zechariah, remember, and tells him, "You're going to have a child." An angel comes and says, "You're going to have a child, and you're going to have to name him John." Zechariah wants a sign, and he says, "This will be the sign. You won't speak until the day that he's born." He shouldn't have asked for a sign. So when he's born, Zechariah has to write down, "No, his name is John." He's already written that down, apparently, to his wife. She knows the name is supposed to be John, and she says his name is John, and they're like, "Hey, there's nobody in your family named John." And he writes down, "His name is John," and when he does that, he can speak and he starts praising God.

But John the Baptist, before he's born, we read in Luke 1 after the story of John the Baptist's conception, it says, "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel went to a virgin, who was betrothed, in the city of Nazareth, Mary." In the sixth month of what? It was the sixth month of the pregnancy of Elizabeth. So Elizabeth is six months along and she's finished two trimesters when Mary conceives. Mary conceives her baby. She's told she's going to conceive, by the angel, and then she conceives, and somewhere in that first trimester, she makes the trip from Nazareth, down close to Jerusalem, where Elizabeth was, and she goes to stay with her, remember? So Mary may be a couple weeks pregnant, she may be a month pregnant, she's in the first trimester, and when she goes down there, what happens? She walks into the room, into the house, and she does something like, you know how you go to someone's house and you knock on the door, and maybe the door is open, or you're supposed to come in because it's family, and you say, "Hello! I'm here." So that's what Mary did. She opens the door, "Hello, I'm here." At the moment her voice hits Elizabeth's ears, the baby leaps in Elizabeth's womb, and

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Elizabeth begins prophesying, praising God. She says as a part of what she says, “How is it that the mother of my Lord has come to visit me?” She didn’t know that before. She didn’t know Mary was going to conceive the Son of God, but the Spirit of God working through the baby in her womb tells her. The baby in her womb, actually, does his purpose. What was he sent to do? He was sent to recognize the Messiah and point Him out. That’s what John the Baptist was born for.

Remember what he would say the first time he saw Him with his physical eyes? At the baptism, he looks at Jesus, and he says, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, that’s Him.” He did the same thing when he was six months in the womb. Hearing the voice, he says, “That’s Him. That’s the one.” John the Baptist is a person, Jesus is a person, and every unborn child is a person, in the eyes of God, not a part of the woman’s body. And by the way, listen, biblically we don’t have rights over our bodies anyway. Just because God created us means we don’t have a right to do whatever we want with our bodies, if it was a part of our body. It’s not. The child is not a part of the body of the mother. It’s separate and distinct, but just to say that, you don’t have a right over your body anyway. God made you. You’re to live for His glory. The unbeliever is responsible to live for the glory of God, not for themselves. Now, they don’t. They live for themselves, but biblically, they’re sinning when they do.

Now, the second thing, God sees every child that’s conceived and developing in the womb, as a person. Finally, thirdly, biblically, God places great value on every human person including those in the womb. The Bible teaches the doctrine of man made in the image of God. In Genesis 1:26-27, when He made man, He said, “Let us make man in Our image,” and so He made them according to His likeness. And the fact that man is in the image of God makes man supremely valuable, far above every other creature. There is a chasm between man and the highest creature, biblically, because we possess the ability to know God, and we are created to reflect God, to know God. We are like God, and every single human being is a bearer of God’s image and stamp. In Genesis 9 after the flood, remember, God makes this promise that if anyone sheds man’s blood, He says, “By man shall his blood be shed.” He institutes capital punishment for animals and people, basically, and why does He do that? It’s because whoever sheds man’s blood has struck out against the image of God, for God made man in His own image. That’s why you don’t kill man.

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The child in the womb is in the image of God, in the likeness of God. This means it doesn't matter if there are deformities or birth defects. In reality, birth defects and deformities are just a matter of degrees. Aren't we all defective and deformed? But every single person is valuable because they bear the image of God, and Christians are people who should be testifying to that and demonstrating that. And historically, we have been the ones that have been doing that.

Now, those three things mean that abortion is a sin against God. It's striking out against God, because it's striking out against the image of God. It's striking out against God, but it's killing a distinct person. It is destroying what God has created, so it is evil. That is the reality of how God sees it. And you know, this is really the reality of more and more how even good science sees it too.

Every time you look at it, the more they find out about the prenatal development of the child in the womb, they say that from day six, you can already see with microscopes, fingers and toes, the sixth day after conception. I was reading an excerpt from a book that had a statement by an unbelieving geneticist at Georgetown University who was saying that the reality of what happens when a sperm and an ovum unite, you have 23 chromosomes in the sperm, and that's the potential of life. That's not life, but that's the potential of life. You have 23 chromosomes in an ovum, the egg. That's the potential of life. And this person was saying when they unite, that is life, that you have a distinct, human person. This is what this person is saying in the book. I'm like thinking, "You should not be writing this. This is going to get you in trouble in your field." But as they look at it, they're just calling it like they see it. Everything about the hair color, whether you're going to have freckles or not, is there at the moment of conception. It's there, and people know it. They don't even have to really be convinced. That's one of the reasons they react, is their own conscience. So we can be gentle as we proclaim the truth. You don't have to yell, because if you just speak it, and you speak it kindly in love, what will happen is their own conscience, if they've had an abortion and they haven't faced up to it, their own conscience is condemning them.

I read an article, actually Al Mohler referred to an article and I looked at it. This was two years ago that this lady wrote it. It was talking about 40 years after Roe V. Wade, the one area in the culture that's most perplexing to the people on that side of the culture war is abortion. They feel like they're winning everywhere else, but we can't make inroads against abortion. Why? It's because people just know it's wrong. You read testimonies of people that had abortions. There was an article in the *New York Magazine* last year in which they had 26 people talk about their

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experiences of abortion. The idea was to help people feel better about it, and they shared about it, and so many of them when they would talk about it, would say *my baby* or *my child*. That's not what they say they believe, but they cannot deny the reality of the truth.

Now, we don't just tell them the truth about abortion. We tell them the truth about Christ. That's always the goal is to get to Jesus, to tell them about Jesus, because the reality is, as I said earlier, we're all murderers. We really are. We're all murderers. We're all adulterers. We're all thieves. We're all blasphemers. If you see yourself correctly, you understand that about yourself, and so then you have the good news of saying to someone who now understands that they have done something horrible, "Listen, there is forgiveness. There is a King. His name is Jesus, and you've offended Him, but if you will come to Him humbly, you will receive His loving-kindness and His mercy." That's the glory of the Gospel. I love the promise of it in Isaiah 52:7 and following. This was 700 years before the Gospel comes clear in Jesus. They were prophesying, and he said:

***Isaiah 52:7***

***How lovely on the mountains  
Are the feet of him who brings good news,...***

His feet are lovely, and He's bringing good news. What's the good news?

***Who announces peace  
And brings good news of happiness,...***

The good news of the Gospel is God, though we have been at war with Him by living for ourselves, and doing what we want to do, and living our lives for our own purposes, and He by right has a right to avenge that and to punish us forever, He has sent people to proclaim the offer of peace, to announce the authoritative declaration of Almighty God, "You can have peace with Me through Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace, that He will set you free. He will take away the guilt. He will take away the scars, and He will wash you in His precious blood." Jesus Christ died at Calvary for sins like murder, sins like adultery, sins of every ugly, evil type. He experienced the wrath that we deserve. He exhausted all of it so that there remains no more need of a sacrifice for sins.



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Then you can tell someone, “Listen, all you’ve got to do is repent and believe. All you have to do is turn from your sin. Stop living for yourself and come to a Savior who loves you, and though your sins are as scarlet, He will make you as white as snow. You don’t have to push it away and deal with the guilt by blaming society, and blaming others, and convincing yourself. No, acknowledge the reality. What I did was evil. It was sin. I’m a murderer, and I need a Savior, but Jesus Christ is able to cleanse me. His blood is more than able to cleanse you. His blood is more than able to cleanse me. We can be clean forever. How wonderful that is.” And when you know that, then there is therefore now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus. No condemnation. Zero. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our sins from us. You don’t bear it anymore.

If you’ve had that in your past, don’t let Satan bring it up anymore. If you’ve aborted a child, and if you are in Christ, God does not remember it, and none of us who belong to Him have any business looking down on anybody. We’re all murderers who have been washed. That’s what we were, but look what we are now. How amazing that is. That song we sang earlier—When Satan tempts me to despair—Satan’s an accuser. He’s the murderer who has invented all this stuff from the beginning. Jesus said Satan was a murderer from the beginning, because Satan is a liar, and that’s why the truth is the way we fight against him, the truth of God’s word. But he’s a murderer from the beginning, and he comes against Christians, and he accuses us. So if you have those kinds of sins in your past, but you are in Christ, don’t let Satan accuse you. That verse that we sang—*When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see Him there, who made an end to all my sin. Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free. For God the just is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me.* Isn’t that amazing? That is good news that people need to hear. May the Lord help us be bearers of good news and have the joy of seeing people set free.

Let’s pray together...

*Our Father, we thank You that You are a God of infinite grace and mercy, that You have done everything necessary to make ungodly people holy in Your sight forever, because of Your amazing and wondrous love. What a privilege it is to be Your children, to know that our sins have been removed from us, and what an incredible message that is that we can share with others. Help us be faithful in these dark days to shine the light of the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We pray in His Name, Amen.*

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“Unleashing the Power of the Truth – Part I”

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