

# A Straightforward Choice

BY CARMEN LAU

The Dominant Christian Political Narrative promotes, as gospel mandate, a zero-sum definition of abortion as evil. This is part of a bundle of “family values” that gives a roadmap for a person seeking power to get the “Christian” vote. Abortion remains an issue over which Christians want to use the power of law to regulate the decisions of others and are willing to override Christian virtues of liberty, choice, and individual freedom to do this.

Legal abortion, a private matter, has invaded public discourse to become a key driver in political conversation. Those wanting to outlaw abortion speak from a Christian perspective, but such an adamant view does not account for the entirety of scripture. Some stories show consideration for nuance and seem to leave distinction for “potential” personhood vs. “actual” personhood. For example, Numbers 5 describes a priest presiding over a litmus test for a woman’s infidelity that would, in some cases, result in abortion, and Exodus 21 gives support for a nuance between actual and potential life when it describes those who cause a miscarriage to be worthy of a penalty for mere property loss, instead of the penalty for murder.

Advocacy for the powerless, a concept found in Scripture, has been used in the coercive effort to eradicate legal and safe abortion. Yet, why focus the bulk of Christian advocacy efforts in a context of legislation about a private, difficult procedure that will be enacted on another person’s body? Plenty of vulnerable people are in our world, already born, and they could benefit from someone willing to speak up on their behalf.

Earth, complicated and imperfect, will not become a place where abortion never happens. Therefore, it seems to me that seeking common good for all in the community requires that society make provision for the procedure to be safe. It is a woman’s honor and privilege to host a growing baby, but a woman should have a choice of whether or not to become a mother. In the last 100 years, reflecting

the availability of more sophisticated birth-control methods, Protestants have accepted the use of birth control and the notion of “voluntary motherhood.” While I personally feel sad to know that abortions occur, my faith will not allow me to go along with harnessing the power of the state to minimize someone else’s human rights. If an Adventist believes abortion to be immoral, then that person is free not to have an abortion and to support single mothers in one’s sphere.

Politicians in my state, Alabama, gather support by the use of the abortion issue. A couple of years ago, Roy Moore narrowly lost the Alabama Senatorial race when a lot of people apparently chose to ignore his questionable actions and vote primarily on the issue of which candidate met the arbitrary metric of being “pro-life.” The Alabama Legislature recently enacted “pro-life” legislation, claiming to honor the human rights of a fetus. I remain baffled by an argument which states that human rights are of ultimate importance in the context of what goes on in another person’s uterus, while human rights can be ignored for immigrants, prisoners, people living in other countries, children, and people who live in poverty.

Sometimes, morality seems very straightforward, but the morality of abortion is not a clear issue and is complicated by the concepts of when life begins and by the degree one thinks the political arm of the state should be harnessed to enact a particular moral framework. In addition, people who believe God values choice should be willing to allow others to choose in complex situations. We can find a multitude of vulnerable people who need advocates. Practicing advocacy on the behalf of those people is a straightforward choice.



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