



# ABORTION

## LESSON #2

### THE ONE KEY QUESTION

Welcome back to our ClaritasU course on abortion! In the last lesson, we got a brief overview of the abortion issue, learning where it came from and why it's so controversial. In this lesson, though, we're going to zoom in on the fundamental question that divides people on the topic—the one key question.

Remember back in our course on same-sex marriage, where we learned how to always bring the conversation back to one, central question: what is marriage? Many people want to move the same-sex marriage discussion to all sorts of other things. They say “love is love” or “marriage is about love,” or they ask why you don't like LGBT people, or any number of other objections. But those things are secondary to the main question: what is marriage? Answering *that* question will determine whether same-sex couples can become married or not.

Well, the same holds for the abortion issue. Whenever you're discussing abortion, there's really only one question that matters: **are the unborn human?** I'll say that again, because it's so important. Whenever you're discussing abortion, there's really only one



question that matters: are the unborn human?

Just think about it. If the unborn are *not* human, then abortion is no big deal. Abortion would be just like smacking a mosquito or taking medicine to kill off some bacteria. It's not immoral, and there's really no problem.

But if the unborn *are* human, then abortion is equivalent to taking an innocent human life, and there could be no greater immoral act than that.

So you see how the whole conversation really hinges around that question?

Although, friends and family may bring up all sorts of other considerations, things like rape, incest, bodily rights, etc.—and we'll learn how to handle all those objections in this course, so don't worry—all those things are really secondary to this main question: are the unborn human?

So I want you to lock that question in your mind. Say it a few times in your head: are the unborn human? Are the unborn human? Are the unborn human? I want it to stick in your mind so that whenever you find yourself talking about abortion, you have a sure center-point to keep returning to. Keep bringing the conversation back to that. That's the key question.

So how do you show the unborn are human? It's very simple. Here's the best strategy I know, which comes from the pro-life apologist Steve Wagner. He calls it the "10-second pro-life apologist"



strategy. It's made of up three questions that you can ask the other person, in less than ten seconds. Here they are:

First, if it's growing, isn't it alive?

Second, if it has human parents, isn't it human?

Third, human beings like you and me are valuable, aren't we?

That's it! Three simple questions to ask the other person. The first question—if it's growing, isn't it alive?—is basic science. It's an indisputable fact that at the moment of conception, a new living organism is created that begins to grow and develop.

The second question is also a scientific fact—if it has human parents, isn't it human? This new organism has human parents and human DNA, so it can't be anything other than human. Now it may be a very small, very undeveloped human, but it's a living, growing, *human* organism. If someone denies that, you can say, "Well, it's not human, what species is it?"

Finally, the third question—human beings like you and me are valuable, aren't we?—is meant to suggest that all human beings have an equal right to life.

Now, this is where you might get a little pushback from people. They might suggest that all humans are valuable, but the unborn are *not* like you and me—they're *less human* than born people, and thus less valuable. In other words, they might believe humanity is a sort of spectrum, so that you can be less human, more human, or



fully human.

So one of your key tasks is to convince others that humanity is binary—you're either human or not. It's just like pregnancy: you're either pregnant or you're not—you can't be partially pregnant, or a little bit pregnant. You're either pregnant or not, and you're either a human organism or not.

And if this is true, then the unborn human is actually just as human as any other human being. They're just as human as an infant, a toddler, a teenager, a young adult, or a senior citizen—they're all equally human, even at different stages of development.

But how do you convince the other person of this? How do you show them that the unborn is just as human, as just as valuable as you and me? Well, this is also pretty easy to do. You just have to remember a simple acronym: **S.L.E.D.** Maybe picture a small child riding a sled down a snowy hill—that's how I remember the acronym, how I stick it in my mind.

Here's what S.L.E.D. stands for: **size, level of development, environment, and dependency.** These are the only four ways that the unborn *differ* from other humans. Your goal is to show why these differences are only *arbitrary* differences, like age or hair color, and that they don't affect the humanity of the unborn; they don't make them any less human.

So let's go through them one by one. **First, let's start with the "S," which stands for size.** Someone might say, "How can something so small be a person? After conception, the embryo is just a clump a



cells!" What you want to affirm is exactly what Dr. Seuss says in *Horton Hears a Who*: "A person's a person, no matter how small." Size is irrelevant to whether someone is a human being, and you can prove this by asking the other person, "Is a toddler less of a human than a teenager, since the toddler is much smaller?" Of course not, they'll say—they're both equally human. Or you might ask, "How big must an unborn child become to really be considered human?" That will be tough for them to answer. In any case, size is irrelevant to whether someone is human. Really small people and really large people are equally human.

Let's look at the second part of the S.L.E.D. acronym: **the "L," which stands for level of development.** Just as with size, level of development is irrelevant to whether someone is human. A critic might say, "Well, the fetus can't think or feel pain. It doesn't have a fully developed brain." But this same reasoning can apply to many born people who have developmental disabilities, and can't think properly or feel pain. Are these people less human than the rest of us? Of course not.

Or consider this: scientists tell us that our brains don't fully develop until around 25 years old. Does that mean everyone under 25 is less human than older adults? No. Again, level of development is irrelevant to whether someone is human or not. They may be a less-developed human being, but they're still a human being, and they still have a right to life.

Let's turn to the third part of the S.L.E.D. acronym: we've looked at size and level of development, now **the "E" stands for environment.** The environment, or where someone resides, is also irrelevant to



whether they're human. Someone might say, "The fetus isn't in the world yet. It doesn't even breathe air." But of course they *are* in the world, they're just hidden from view—they're developing inside the womb of their mother. And this is the exact environment they're supposed to be in, the place where someone at their stage of development should reside.

It doesn't matter whether a human lives in a womb, an incubator, an igloo, a house—it's still human, regardless of its environment. You don't lose the right to live based on where you reside.

Let's turn to the fourth and final part of the S.L.E.D. acronym: **the "D," which stands for dependency.** Some people might suggest the unborn are not fully human because they're completely dependent on another human being to live, namely their mother. There are a couple ways to reply to this.

First, you want to highlight other *born* people who are completely dependent on people to live. Think about people with severe disabilities or elderly who are close to death. Or maybe use an analogy to show why being dependent doesn't remove your right to life.

Here's a good one: suppose two scuba divers are exploring an underwater cave, when the first divers' oxygen tanks breaks. The only way he can survive is if he gets air from the second diver's tank, which has more than enough oxygen to share with him. The situation is clear: the first diver, whose tank broke, is completely dependent on the second diver. Does that give the second diver the right to pull out a knife and kill the first diver because of his



dependency? Of course not! In fact, in that case, we'd say the second diver has a duty to share his oxygen with the first diver, especially since he has plenty of oxygen to spare, making the sacrifice minimal. When someone is dependent on you, and you're able to help without an extraordinary burden, usually you have a duty to help them, not kill them.

In any case, a person's humanity does not waver based on their degree of dependency. You don't become less human the more you depend on others.

So that's a good acronym to remember—S.L.E.D. Keep coming back to it.

Let's recap so far. Now you've learned the key question in the abortion debate—are the unborn human?—and how to make the case that the unborn are, in fact, human. Just use the "10-second pro-life" argument, which has three questions: if it's growing, isn't it alive? If it has human parents, isn't it human? And human beings like you and me are valuable, aren't we?

Then in this lesson, you learned the S.L.E.D. acronym—size, level of development, environment, and dependency—which are the four differences people point to in order to claim the unborn are less human than other people—or not human at all. But you now know why those difference don't matter, at least when it comes to human value. Small, undeveloped, dependent children in the womb are just as human as grown adults.

So I hope you're already feeling more confident now when it comes



to talking about abortion. But I know what you're probably thinking: what about cases where someone actually *admits* the unborn child is human—when they agree with everything we just said, they agree the unborn child is human—but they still think there are some cases in which abortion is justified. Well, stay tuned for the next lesson because you'll learn exactly what to say to those objections. I'll see you there!