



ABORTION

LESSON #3

TROT OUT THE TODDLER

Welcome back to our ClaritasU course on abortion! In the last lesson, we focused on the one key question that you always want to return to—"are the unborn human?" That's the question you want the other person to wrestle with and reflect on.

But in this lesson, we're going to focus on another strategy. In fact, I actually think it's the most powerful strategy you can use in the abortion discussion, so you'll want to master this one. It's called "trot out the toddler."

There are several versions of this strategy. The one I learned came from Trent Horn, and he got it from pro-life apologist Scott Klussendorf. But here's how it works.

Basically, when someone gives you a reason why they think abortion is justified, you show how that same reason can justify killing a two-year-old toddler. Since virtually nobody thinks its okay to kill an innocent two-year-old toddler, for any reason, we can show the principle must be flawed, and that it's not a good reason to permit abortion. Does that make sense?



This is a type of argument known as a *reductio ad absurdum*. Quick philosophy lesson: in a *reductio ad absurdum*, you take the other person's principle and apply it to a situation that, when worked out logically, has absurd ramifications. The point is to show that if you want to hold that principle, you have to also embrace those absurdities. But if, like most people, you want to avoid the absurd ramifications, then you have to give up the principle, too.

Now I know that may sound a little abstract, so let me show you how this works out concretely. Here's how to use the "trot out the toddler" strategy.

First, when you're talking with a pro-choice person, get them to reveal *why* they think abortion may be acceptable. For instance, they might say something like, "Well, I think if the child is unwanted, or will be raised in poverty or harsh circumstances, then the mother should be allowed to abort it so it doesn't have to come into such an awful world and have such a miserable life."

After determining the reason they think abortion should be allowed, your next move is to apply that same justification to abort a two-year-old—you trot out the toddler. So you might say: "Okay, I see where you're coming from. And I agree with you that it's awful for any child to be raised in poverty. We should do everything we can to help poor mothers and children. But let me ask you this: suppose I have a two-year-old right here next to me, and his family is extremely poor. He's being raised by a single mother who has no money or energy to care for him. Suppose the child lives in a deeply dysfunctional neighborhood, on a street filled with gang



violence and drugs, with bullets flying by each night. If his situation is that awful, should his mother just be allowed to kill him?"

The overwhelming majority of people will say, "No, that's ridiculous. Of course not. Of course the mother shouldn't kill her two-year-old child."

Usually they can see where you're going, but go ahead and make the connection for them. Say, "Okay, I definitely agree with you. The mother *shouldn't* kill her two-year-old child simply because he lives in difficult circumstances. But if the unborn are just as human as toddlers, then why is it okay to kill them? Why is it wrong to kill two-year-olds who *definitely* live in bad circumstances, but it's okay to kill the unborn who only *might* live in bad circumstances?"

Now, at this point, one of two things will happen. Either the person will see the problem and admit you have a good point, that we shouldn't kill a child just because it lives in a difficult situation. But sometimes they'll push back and say, "Well, that's not a good analogy. The unborn are different than two-year-olds because...." and then they'll try to break the analogy by suggesting some important difference: "the unborn are different than two-year-olds because they can't feel pain," or the "unborn aren't conscious" or "the unborn don't have fully-developed brains" or "the unborn aren't born yet."

And when that happens, great, because all those responses turn our attention back to the one key question we learned in the last lesson—"What are the unborn? Are the unborn human?" It might be true that the unborn feel less pain, are not conscious, don't have



full-developed brains, or haven't been born yet. But none of that really matters if they are human beings, as human as you, me, or any two-year-old. If the unborn are innocent human beings like us, then *no* reason can justify killing them.

So you see how all that works? Step one is to identify why the other person supports abortion. Step two is to show why that reason would also justify killing a two-year-old. Step three is to show that if we wouldn't kill a two-year-old for that reason, we shouldn't kill the unborn for that reason either. And step four, if they push back and suggest that the unborn are significantly different than two-year-olds, is to go back to the one key question—"are the unborn human?"—and show why the unborn are every bit as human as two-year-olds.

I'll give you a few more examples so you can see it in action. Suppose the other person says, "The fetus isn't fully developed yet so it's not really human" then you might say, "Well, a two-year-old isn't fully developed yet, so should its mother have the right to kill it?"

Or someone might say, "Women should have the right to choose" and then you might say, "I agree that in many cases, women should be free to decide how to act. But let me ask you this: should a woman have a right to choose to kill her two-year-old toddler?"

They might say, "Well, the fetus is dependent on the mother to live, and nobody has a right to use the mother's body" and then you can say, "Well, the two-year-old is dependent on the mother to live, too."



So you see how that works? Whenever someone offers an argument to justify abortion, see if you can't use that same argument to justify killing a two-year-old. And if you can, then it's a bad argument.

If you want more examples and details on this strategy, check out Chapter 3 in Trent Horn's excellent book, *Persuasive Pro-Life*. I agree with Trent that it's probably the most effective strategy in the pro-life toolbox because it quickly undercuts the most common arguments given for abortion.

Which actually takes us to our next video, which is, in fact, our expert interview with Trent Horn himself, the author of *Persuasive Pro-Life*. I can't wait to share that with you. So stay tuned, and I'll see you there!