Crawford County Life Conference (04/20/13)

* Introduction
  + Most of you here identify as pro-life
    - Today, polls indicate that a larger percentage of Americans identify as ‘pro-life’ than ever
    - However, how many of us, and how many of them, can actually tell others why?
      * How many can make a persuasive case for life?
      * Has anyone ever taught you how to make the case?
      * It’s easy to say ‘I’m pro-life;’ it’s much harder to defend that view
      * Many of our pro-life politicians can’t make the case, and they just reflect the general consensus
  + We must be prepared to make the case for life
    - Lives depend on it!
    - Simply saying ‘I’m pro-life’ won’t end abortion or solve any of the other life issues
    - We must make the case
      * Individually
      * To groups—in churches, schools, and other organizations
    - Legislation and the Supreme Court are important, but this battle won’t be won in Des Moines or Washington DC
      * We must convince people—our friends, family, and neighbors
      * When individuals are convinced, then the culture changes, and when the culture changes, then the demand for legislation will increase exponentially
      * We must still lobby and work for pro-life legislation, but if we aren’t making the case in the public square, all that hard work will go for nothing
    - Today, I’m going to help you to make the case in your life
  + Three caveats
    - I’m not here to make the biblical case for life
      * That is important, and God’s view of life, revealed in Scripture must be proclaimed
      * But we must also be prepared to make reasonable arguments in the public square to people who don’t accept the authority of the Bible
    - I don’t know everything!
      * This presentation is based in large part on the work of Scott Klusendorf, a tremendous pro-life apologist
      * I have never been in public debate, and I certainly don’t have the experience that he has in this area
      * For some questions, I may have to defer to his work, and I encourage you to visit his website
      * There are other techniques available, but Mr. Klusendorf is very well read in the great thinkers of the pro-life movement, so these are well-informed tactics
    - The material presented this morning is intended to make the case for the protection of the **unborn** at the **street level**
      * In many ways, it has that narrow, but extremely important application
      * More sophisticated arguments are needed for other contexts; I encourage you to not make this the only time you study pro-life apologetics
      * While I am dealing primarily with abortion, I believe that many of these principles also have application to the other pro-life issues; I will try to point those out along the way
* Four tasks
  + Clarify the debate
  + Establish a foundation for the debate
  + Answer objections persuasively
  + Teach and equip
* Clarify the debate
  + Our position is quite simple: **Pro-life people contend that abortion unjustly takes the life of an innocent human being**
  + The one question the debate should focus on is: who or what is the unborn?
    - This is the one question that gets lost in the shuffle
      * We argue about choice, about privacy, about women’s rights, but these are all peripheral and distract from the main issue
      * The vast majority of pro-choice arguments (especially on the street level) *assume* the unborn aren’t human, they don’t prove it
      * The issue we should be debating: Is the unborn a member of the human family?
        + If so, no justification for abortion is adequate

I will deal with so-called ‘hard cases’ briefly in a bit

Innocent human life should not be destroyed to benefit others

* + - * + If not, no justification for abortion is needed

The ‘safe, legal, and rare’ language makes little sense—in fact, the ‘rare’ part is dropping off

If the unborn isn’t human, you could have as many abortions as you wanted

* + - Our task is to turn common, street-level pro-abortion arguments to that fundamental question—here’s how:
  + Trot out the toddler
    - Any time you hear a pro-abortion argument, think, ‘would this argument also work for killing a toddler?’
    - If not, then the person you are interacting with is assuming that the unborn isn’t human
      * They aren’t working to prove it
      * Perhaps the unborn are not morally equal to toddlers, but that must be proven, not assumed
    - Here’s how it works:
      * Someone makes an assertion against you: “Women have a right to make their own private decisions. What goes on in the bedroom is their business and no one else’s.”
      * You don’t get angry, you don’t get defensive, you simply say: “I have a two-year old here…” and restate their argument, except you replace the unborn with the toddler
      * Can I kill it? Of course not, it’s a human!
      * Aha! That’s exactly the point! Is the unborn a human just like that toddler? That’s what we need to discuss
    - Trotting out the toddler forces your opponent to make that case
      * It puts them on the defensive
      * It sets the terms of the debate
      * It keeps you from running down bunny trails
* Establishing a foundation for the debate
  + Once you have focused the debate on the identity of the unborn, you need to argue persuasively that **the unborn are full members of the human family deserving of the same rights that all humans are owed simply on account of their being human**
  + Who or what is the unborn? (Science)
    - **From the earliest stages of development, embryos are distinct, living, and whole human beings**
      * The science of embryology affirms this quite clearly
      * You didn’t come from a zygote; you were a zygote!
      * You had to develop, but the kind of thing you were was not in dispute
    - If the unborn are distinct, living, and whole human beings…
  + Are the unborn entitled to the same protections as all other members of the human family? (Philosophy)
    - **There is no essential difference between the embryo you once were and the adult you are today that would justify killing you at that earlier stage of development**
    - Most pro-abortion advocates confuse human value with human function—we need to assert that differences between embryos and ourselves are matters of development, not value (they are non-essential to our nature as humans)—we do this with the SLED test
      * The kind of thing we are (human) remains the same through time and change
      * Size: You were smaller as an embryo, but since when does your body size determine value? Are large humans more valuable than smaller ones?
      * Level of Development: True, you were less developed as an embryo, but two-year olds are less developed than teenagers. Do teens have a greater right to life?
      * Environment: Where you are has no bearing on what you are. How does a journey of eight inches down the birth canal suddenly change the essential nature of the unborn?
      * Degree of Dependency: Sure, you depended on your mother for survival, but since when does dependence on another human mean we can kill you?
      * These are not good reasons to say that you had no right to life then but do have it now—*any of these reasons can be used to take your life today, or the life of anyone else*
    - **Humans have value simply because they are the kind of thing they are (human), not because of some acquired property they may gain or lose during their lifetimes**—this is where the ‘personhood’ argument, used even by pro-lifers, shipwrecks
* Dealing with objections (bodily autonomy pg. 42)
  + We’ve already done some of this, but there is one in particular that needs to be dealt with: Hard cases
    - Rape and incest—with compassion and understanding, trot out the two-year old to see that these objections hold no water
      * Can we kill anyone who brings to mind a painful event?
      * If killing you makes me feel better, can I kill you?
    - Life of the mother—when the mother’s life is threatened, and only one will live, or if both will die, almost all pro-life people permit an abortion
      * This situation is then the excruciatingly difficult decision between the lives of two human beings
      * Ethicists generally concur that the mother should be saved
  + Understanding the difference between objective and subjective
    - “If you don’t agree with an abortion, then don’t have one!”
    - Our opposition to abortion isn’t a matter of personal preference or opinion, but a matter of truth
  + Dealing with the ad hominem argument
    - “If you hate abortion so much, why don’t you adopt all these unwanted children!”
    - What I do with my life has no bearing on the truth of whether the unborn are human and we are justified in killing them
    - I may be inconsistent, but that inconsistency doesn’t destroy the truth
* Teach and equip
  + The pro-life movement is filled with articulate defenders of the unborn—we should all become the same
    - Learn from them
    - Read their books
  + Our case is twofold:
    - The unborn are distinct, living, and whole human beings (science)
    - There is no essential difference between that embryo that I once was and the adult that I am now that justifies killing me at that earlier stage (philosophy)
  + We must be prepared to make the case—lives depend on it!
    - We must proclaim the Law—abortion is a grievous wrong that should be ended; we must make that case in the public square
    - However, we must not stop there—the Gospel must be proclaimed!
      * If churches or individual Christians don’t speak about abortion, we have inexcusably missed the opportunity to bring grace into broken lives (the very calling of the Church!)
      * There are men and women out there scarred by abortion, and they need to hear the only message that can bring healing—Christ’s blood-bought forgiveness
      * We must be ready to support hurting women who have had an abortion and scared women who are considering it—we must have true compassion, not the ‘compassion’ promised by the pro-abortion community