

SESSION 3

The Scientific Case

Being able to answer these questions clearly demonstrates your mastery of the material of the last session. Use this self-assessment exercise as a review of the last session.

STUDENT INTERACTIVE



DEMONSTRATING MASTERY

Try to answer the following questions without using your notes. The answers are found at the end of session 2.

1. Explain the significance of reducing the issue to one question.

Answering only one question allows us to _____

2. What are the two key questions of the illustration?

_____?
_____?

3. Complete these two sentences:

If the unborn is not a human being, _____

If the unborn is a human being, _____

4. What key tactic should we use when addressing specific defenses for abortion (rape, choice, privacy, etc.)?

5. How do you use this tactic?

Ask _____

6. What are the three basic steps of our argument?

1. _____

2. _____

3. Therefore, _____

NOTES

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N O T E S

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I. REVIEW


A IN THE LAST SESSION, WE FOCUSED ON TWO IMPORTANT TASKS.

- 1. First, we **simplified the debate.**
 - a. We reduced the issue to one critical question: “What is the unborn?”
 - b. We offered the illustration “Can I kill this?” for clarification.
- 2. Second, we **learned the argument**, the three steps of the moral logic of the pro-life position.
 - a. *Step one: It’s wrong to intentionally kill innocent human beings.*
 - b. *Step two: Abortion intentionally kills an innocent human being.*
 - c. *Step three: Therefore, abortion is wrong.*

B IN THIS SESSION, WE WILL ANSWER THE QUESTION “WHAT IS THE UNBORN?”

- 1. We will learn that scientific evidence supports the argument that abortion kills a real human being.
- 2. We will learn that . . .
 - a. *The unborn is **alive**.*
 - b. *The unborn is a **distinct individual being**, not the mother’s body.*
 - c. *The unborn is a **human being**.*
- 3. If we prove these three points, we will have proven the second premise of our argument: Abortion intentionally kills an innocent human being.

II. FIRST, THE UNBORN IS ALIVE.



AMBASSADOR SKILLS

We often hear the claim that nobody knows when life begins. If no one knows when life begins, is this evidence **in favor** of elective abortion or **against** it? **Against** it. Use this analogy: We don’t blow up a building if we’re not sure it’s empty. We check inside first. If we don’t know if it’s empty, we don’t proceed.

There are no grounds for this uncertainty. It simply isn’t true that no one knows when life begins. Here’s why.

A THE UNBORN IS ALIVE FROM THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION.

- 1. No period of non-life exists in the sequence of events from mating to birth.
 - a. *Life doesn’t **begin** at some stage of development; the unborn is **alive** at every stage.*



N O T E S

Handwriting lines for notes, consisting of multiple horizontal lines.

b. *An unbroken continuum of life stretches from beginning to end: A living sperm unites with a living egg to form a living zygote.*

2. The unborn is growing biologically.

a. *Biological growth begins at the moment of conception, which proves the unborn is alive.*

b. *The unborn possesses each of the biological criteria for life:*

- 1) Metabolism
- 2) Growth (reproduction)
- 3) Reaction to stimuli

3. Abortion kills the unborn (doing so is the purpose of the abortion), and only something alive can be killed.

STUDENT INTERACTIVE



Think for a moment about the challenge “No one knows when life begins.” Rehearse in your mind how you would answer it. Break into pairs and role-play this issue. Have one person say, “No one knows when life begins” and the second person explain the three reasons we know the unborn is alive at every stage. Then switch roles. You may use your notes. (4 minutes)

So, first, the unborn is alive.¹

III. *S*ECOND, THE UNBORN IS A SEPARATE INDIVIDUAL BEING.



*A*MBASSADOR SKILLS

Pro-abortionists often argue that a woman has the right to do whatever she wants with her own body. When confronting this challenge ask, “Is this really an important part of your view?” If they say yes, respond by saying, “If this point is critical, then if I show you it isn’t true, it would seriously undermine your argument, wouldn’t it? Would you then abandon this point?” If they say it’s not important for their view, ask them, “Then why did you bring it up in the first place?”

A THE PERSONAL AUTONOMY ARGUMENT — “A WOMAN HAS THE RIGHT TO DO WHATEVER SHE WANTS WITH HER OWN BODY” — HAS TWO SERIOUS PROBLEMS, WHICH WE CAN BRING TO LIGHT USING THE “ONE-TWO PUNCH” APPROACH.

1. Serious problem #1: The statement is not true.

a. *A woman cannot do whatever she wants with her own body in this country — or any civilized country, for that matter — and neither can a man.*




N O T E S

Lined area for notes.

b. The law can restrict what we do with our bodies when our freedom harms another human being.

- 1) The law routinely interferes with our personal liberties when there is proper justification (i.e., harm to another human being).
- 2) E.g., parents can't abandon their children to take a vacation by claiming a right to do "whatever they want with their own bodies."
- 3) Parents have certain obligations toward their children that they do not have toward strangers.²


 **AMBASSADOR SKILLS**

Exploit this weakness with a question: When can the law restrict what we do with our own bodies?

Answer: When we are a threat to another valuable human being. And that's the very issue here.

Clearly, a woman cannot do whatever she wants with her own body.

2. Serious problem #2: The unborn is not the mother's body.

 **AMBASSADOR SKILLS**

You can prove the unborn is not the mother's body by following this sample dialogue (though for some this particular illustration might be a little aggressive):

Pro-Lifer (to a woman): Can I ask you a personal question? Does your body have a penis?


Woman: No.

Pro-Lifer: Could your unborn's body have a penis?

Woman: Yes.

Pro-Lifer: Then the unborn's body is not your body, is it?

STUDENT INTERACTIVE



Think for a moment about some of the ways the unborn's body may be totally distinct from the mother's body. We've already mentioned one (gender), but what are some others? Share some of these with a partner. (2 minutes)



N O T E S

- b. *External looks can deceive, but DNA gives unmistakable evidence telling us what kind of being any living thing is.*
2. If we watch the development long enough, we will see the zygote form into a more recognizable human shape.
- a. *The cell begins to visually differentiate, eventually allowing us to see clearly what kind of being it is.*
- b. *The zygote can't develop in any direction, but only in a way consistent with its internal structure, or nature.*
3. The unborn doesn't change **into** a human, but rather merely **looks** more human to our eyes.
- a. *Living things don't become different creatures when changing their form.*
- b. *Living things develop according to a certain physical pattern based on the kind of creature they already are. Human forms develop out of human beings.*
- c. *By day 43, the unborn has a beating heart and brainwave activity we can measure on an electroencephalogram.⁵*

GOING DEEPER: INFORMATION FOR SELF-STUDY

The unborn is genetically distinct from her parents. Unlike sperm and ovum, the zygote possesses the active (inherent) capacity to develop into an embryo, fetus, infant, child, and adult. Though the sperm and egg are human cellular material, they will never become human beings if left to themselves. But the zygote is different. It already has everything it needs to function as a human organism. Hence, what actually comes into existence at conception is **not** a "fertilized egg" — sperm and egg cease to exist, strictly speaking, at conception — and it's not a mere clump of human cells. It's a distinct, unified, self-integrating human being. All the genetic material needed to drive the child's development is already there. All her fundamental human capacities are in place.

B THE PRINCIPLE OF BIOGENESIS PROVES THE UNBORN IS A HUMAN BEING.

1. In the 19th century, scientist Louis Pasteur among others disproved the theory of the spontaneous generation of life.
- a. *Maggots don't spontaneously spring from discarded meat.*
- b. *Mice aren't spontaneously created from piles of rags.*
2. Pasteur's discoveries led to the principle of biogenesis,⁶ which states two things.
- a. *First, all life comes from pre-existent life.*
- b. *Second, each being reproduces after its own kind.*



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N O T E S

3. This second point gives us a very practical test.
 - a. *If all living things reproduce after their own kind — that is, offspring come from parents just like them — how can we determine what kind of living being something is?*
 - b. *Ask what kind of **parents** a living thing has.*
 - 1) Since every being reproduces after its own kind, human beings can only reproduce other human beings.
 - 2) Dogs make puppies, fish make guppies, and humans make yuppies.
 - c. *If this principle is denied, it must be explained how two human beings can create a separate being that is not human — in clear violation of the principle of biogenesis — but later becomes one.*



The individual, living offspring of two other human beings must always be another human being.



AMBASSADOR SKILLS

When someone says, “Maybe the unborn is alive, but it’s not human,” ask them these questions:

- How can we distinguish a human from a non-human?
- Could looks be deceiving, so that a true human might not initially look human?
- How can we know for sure that something is a human being?

Then use the two arguments we just covered to help them answer the question.

This brings us to a couple of objections . . .

V. ANSWERING THE OBJECTIONS


A OBJECTION #1: AN ACORN IS NOT AN OAK.

1. Some would attempt to refute our argument by saying, “An acorn is not an oak, but rather a potential oak. In the same way, the unborn isn’t human, but only a potential human.”
2. We can respond by saying, “An acorn actually is a complete oak.”
 - a. *An acorn is an oak at the infant stage.*
 - b. *An oak tree is an oak at the adult stage.*
 - c. *Both are oaks.*
 - d. *An acorn (the infant) can potentially become an oak tree (the adult), but it never becomes an oak. It already is a complete oak, even in its embryonic (seed) stage.*
 - e. *In the same way, human beings at any stage of development are still complete human beings. Saying an acorn isn’t an oak tree only means that an infant isn’t an adult, which we don’t deny.*



N O T E S

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AMBASSADOR SKILLS

You can ask, “What kind of seed is an acorn?” The answer is that it’s an oak seed. You can apply this question to every stage of growth — seed, sprout, sapling, or tree — and the answer will always stay the same — the sprout, sapling, or tree is an oak sprout, sapling, or tree. This shows that the living thing remains itself even though it goes through different stages of development.

B OBJECTION #2: “BUT THE FETUS DOESN’T LOOK LIKE A HUMAN BEING.”

1. Sure it does. We can respond that the fetus looks exactly like all human beings look at this stage of development.
2. Here we learn an important lesson: **Living things never look the same at one stage of development as they do at another.**
 - a. *Change is inherent to biological development. Living things constantly change according to a predetermined growth pattern.*
 - b. *A monarch butterfly goes through many stages of development — from egg to larva to chrysalis to winged butterfly — but always remains a monarch.*
3. The unborn is an **immature** human, like an infant. Living things do not become entirely different creatures in the process of changing their form. Rather, they develop according to a certain physical pattern precisely because of the kind of being they already are.



A fetus is potentially a teenager, and a teenager is potentially a grown-up, but each is actually a human being, regardless of his or her stage of development.

- a. *Nature knows nothing of creatures that start out as one kind of being and slowly become another kind of being.*
- b. *Living creatures only change their form; what they are always stays the same.*

STUDENT INTERACTIVE



Think about the two objections just mentioned: “An acorn is not an oak, only a potential oak” and “The fetus doesn’t look like a human being.” Rehearse in your mind how you would answer them. Pair up and take turns voicing the objections and responses. (5 minutes)

C OBJECTION #3: “THE UNBORN IS ONLY A BLOB OF LIVING TISSUE, NOT A LIVING HUMAN BEING.”

1. First, all human beings are blobs of tissue, in one sense.



N O T E S

2. Second, mere pieces of human tissue must come from some human being. If the unborn is just human tissue, then where is the human being that this human “tissue” came from?
 - a. *It’s not the mother’s tissue, since it doesn’t have her genetic fingerprint.*
 - b. *No, a developing zygote is a complete human being herself who will later shed cells that have her own unique genetic fingerprint.*

VI. *W*HEN DOES THE UNBORN BECOME A MEMBER OF THE HUMAN RACE?

A THERE IS ONLY ONE POSSIBILITY: WHEN SHE BECOMES A DISTINCT LIVING BEING AT THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION.

B THE UNBORN CONTINUES TO BE A HUMAN THROUGHOUT HER LIFE UNTIL THE DAY SHE DIES.

C BIOLOGY, LAWS OF SCIENCE, AND COMMON SENSE ALL SHOW THAT AN UNBORN CHILD AT EVERY STAGE OF HER DEVELOPMENT IS AN INDIVIDUAL, LIVING HUMAN BEING.

1. She has a human genetic structure.
2. She is the offspring of human parents.
3. She will develop an unmistakable human form, given time and nurture.

VII. *W*HAT HAVE WE LEARNED THIS SESSION?

A WE’VE USED SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO GIVE THREE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION “WHAT IS THE UNBORN?”

1. First, the unborn is alive.
 - a. *There is no period of non-life.*
 - b. *The unborn is growing biologically.*
 - c. *Abortion kills the unborn, and only something living can be killed.*
2. Second, the unborn is a separate individual being, not his mother’s body.
 - a. *He can be a different gender from his mother.*
 - b. *He has a separate brain and central nervous system.*
 - c. *He can have a different blood type.*
 - d. *He has his own unique genetic fingerprint.*
3. Third, the unborn is a complete human being as long as he’s alive.
 - a. *He has a human genetic signature.*
 - b. *He is the offspring of human parents (principle of biogenesis).*
 - c. *He’s not partially human, potentially human, or possibly human.*



N O T E S

STUDENT INTERACTIVE



SELF-ASSESSMENT

Try to answer the following questions without using your notes.

1. Give three reasons we know the unborn is alive.

- From intercourse to fertilization to development, there is no period of _____.
- The unborn is growing _____.
- The purpose of abortion is to _____ something that is _____.

2. What is the “one-two punch” response to the claim “A woman can do whatever she wants with her own body”?

- A woman _____ do whatever she wants with her own body in a _____.
- The unborn’s _____ is not the _____.

3. Give three reasons we know the unborn’s body is not the mother’s body.

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.

4. How do we know the distinct life of the unborn starts at conception?

- That’s when we see the appearance of a unique _____.

5. Give two reasons why we know the unborn is a human being.

- Her genetic code has a _____.
- She is the offspring of _____.

6. Respond to the claim “An acorn is not an oak, only a potential oak.”

- An acorn is a _____ in the _____ stage.

7. Respond to the claim “The fetus doesn’t look like a human being.”

- She looks exactly like all _____ look at this stage of _____.



N O T E S

SELF-ASSESSMENT WITH ANSWERS

1. Give three reasons we know the unborn is alive.
 - From intercourse to fertilization to development, there is no period of non-life.
 - The unborn is growing biologically.
 - The purpose of abortion is to kill something that is alive.
2. What is the “one-two punch” response to the claim “A woman can do whatever she wants with her own body”?
 - First, a woman cannot do whatever she wants with her own body in a civilized society. Second, the unborn’s body is not the woman’s body.
3. Give three reasons we know the unborn’s body is not the mother’s body.
 - The unborn can be a different gender.
 - She can have a different blood type.
 - She has a different brain and central nervous system.
 - She has her own unique genetic fingerprint.
4. How do we know the distinct life of the unborn starts at conception?
 - That’s when we see the appearance of a unique genetic fingerprint.
5. Give two reasons why we know the unborn is a human being.
 - Her genetic code has a human signature and she is the offspring of human parents.
6. Respond to the claim “An acorn is not an oak, only a potential oak.”
 - An acorn is a true oak in the infant or seed stage. It is potentially an adult tree, but it is always an oak by nature.
7. Respond to the claim “The fetus doesn’t look like a human being.”
 - She looks exactly like all human beings look at this stage of development.

GOING DEEPER: INFORMATION FOR SELF-STUDY

- For practice: Find a pro-life friend and, using your notes, explain the concepts you learned in this session. This is an example of “each one teach one.” Your friend will learn something new and profitable and you will be rehearsing your knowledge by teaching others. This is the most powerful tool available to build your knowledge.
- Look for an opportunity to engage someone in a conversation on abortion, employing some of the ideas and tactics you’re learning. You don’t have to know everything perfectly; just jump in, but in a friendly, inquisitive way. Be sure to review your notes after the conversation to reinforce your learning.
- Be alert this week for public remarks made on the abortion question. Read letters to the editor in your local paper or any items in the news weeklies. Explain to a friend what you’ve observed that you might not have noticed before as a result of what you’ve learned these past three sessions.
- Read chapter 4 in Precious Unborn Human Persons (“Human Non-Persons,” 9 pages) to get a jump on the next session.



N O T E S

- Review the self-assessment exercise above so you will be able to answer all the questions without the prompts. At the beginning of the next class you will be given an exercise to demonstrate your mastery of these questions. Be prepared.
- Skim over the next lesson in this workbook before next class to prepare yourself for the session. This simple preview will really help you understand the material when you cover it in the next session.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

by Gregory Koukl

MODIFIED PRO-CHOICE

Whenever you hear someone say, “I am personally against abortion, but I don’t think any laws should be passed against it,” you can immediately jump in with a question. Simply ask, “Why are you personally against abortion?” You’ll almost always hear them respond, “I’m personally against abortion because I think it kills an innocent human being, but that’s my personal belief.”

Follow up their response with this comment: “Let me see if I understand you correctly. You say that abortion takes the life of an innocent human child, but mothers should not be prevented from killing their own children.”

They’ll most likely be surprised to hear it phrased in that way, but that’s what their view amounts to when you take the spin off of it.

A civil war and 100 years of oppression stood between the slave as a piece of property and the slave as a human being. The same war is taking place today for the unborn.

ARE AFRICAN-AMERICANS HUMAN BEINGS?

Are African-Americans human beings? Believe it or not, there was a time when the Supreme Court’s answer to this question was no. African-Americans weren’t considered human beings if they were slaves.

The year was 1856. Dred Scott, a Black slave, had been taken north of the Mason-Dixon line into Illinois and Wisconsin where slavery was prohibited by the Missouri Compromise. In that free land, Scott sued for his freedom and lost. The Supreme Court ruled that the Compromise was unconstitutional. Congress, they said, had no authority to limit slavery in that way.

In the Court’s mind, the choice to own slaves was an individual decision, a private matter for each citizen to determine on his own apart from interference by the



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N O T E S

state. If a person chose not to keep slaves out of an act of conscience, that was his own decision. He could not force that choice on others. Every person had a private right to choose for himself.

Dred Scott was declared “chattel” — human property. He was a possession of his owner, and the owner had a right to do whatever he wanted with his assets. Three of the Supreme Court justices even held that a Negro who had descended from slaves had no rights as an American citizen and thus no standing in the court. A civil war and 100 years of oppression stood between the slave as a piece of property and the slave as a human being.

Today the dream of Black America has come true, by and large. Slavery is a thing of the past and African-Americans are well into the mainstream of American life. In a climate of civil rights and civil liberties, the question “Are African-Americans human beings?” sounds bizarre and almost comical. Who would ask such a thing today?

The question, however, is still being asked, though with a twist: Is an unborn baby a human being? Characteristically, our nation has given the same answer as Dred Scott’s Supreme Court: No. The unborn child is the property of the woman who carries it, and a woman has the right to do whatever she wants with her own property. Abortion is a private, individual decision that cannot be denied by others. Every person has a right to choose.

Much of the justification for this position is based on alleged uncertainty about when life begins. However, the scientific community is of one mind on this. Biologically, the life of a new organism always begins at conception. If the biological life of any being begins at conception, then the termination of a pregnancy kills the life of an individual being, however rudimentary its development may be.

When a human conceives, what kind of being has begun a new life? There’s only one answer: a human being. From the very first day, a small, individual human being develops in his mother’s womb. If her pregnancy is terminated, a life is lost — the life of a human being. There’s no way around it.

In the case of humans, however, a new category distinct from biological life has been added: personhood. When does the human being become a protected member of the human community?

Whether a baby is a “person” or not is a question for the lawmakers to decide. The legal concept of personhood is malleable. Lawmakers define who is protected by the law and who is excluded. The law says, for example, that even a company can be a person; a corporation has its own identity. On the other hand, in 1856, black slave babies were not considered persons in the Taney Court.

In 1973, the Blackmun Supreme Court, in the spirit of Dred Scott, relegated the unborn child to the status of chattel — mere human property. Their decision to do this, however, will not change the fact that every aborted pregnancy forces a living being to lose his life — a human being.



N O T E S

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Some have suggested that brainwaves ought to be the evidence of human life, but if the unborn isn't alive before it has brainwaves, how does it ever grow a brain?
- 2 This is one of the problems with Judith Jarvis Thompson's "violinist" illustration. For a thorough refutation see the article entitled "Unstringing the Violinist," by Gregory Koukl (available through Stand to Reason).
- 3 Landrum Shettles, *Rites of Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 37.
- 4 Alan Gutmacher, *Life in the Making: The Story of Human Procreation* (New York: Viking Press, 1933), 3, as quoted in Robert Marshall and Charles Donovan, *Blessed Are the Barren: The Social Policy of Planned Parenthood* (San Francisco: 1991), 294 — 5.
- 5 For "heart," see K. L. Moore, *Before We Are Born* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company, 1989), 52, 204; and B. Pansky, *Review of Medical Embryology* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), 302. For "brain," see H. Hamlin, "Life or Death by EEG," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 12 October 1964.
- 6 See R. L. Wysong, *The Creation-Evolution Controversy* (East Lansing: Inquiry Press, 1976), 180 — 2. See also W. G. Hale, *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Biology*, s.v. "biogenesis"; and Eleanor Lawrence, *Henderson's Dictionary of Biological Terms*, s.v. "spontaneous generation." Only Wysong uses the phrase "the Law of Biogenesis." The other texts affirm the salient details of the concept. The principle is virtually self-evident. The burden of proof is on the shoulders of the one who denies that human parents always produce human offspring.

