

An Invitation to Life – Psalm 139:13-18

Introduction: Today is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. I think it's strange that we have to set aside a day to remember human life, don't you? I mean, shouldn't we celebrate life every day? Isn't the sanctity of human life something that we should believe in and uphold without question?

One would think that but according to the latest U.S. Fish & Wildlife services information, there are 574 endangered animals and 749 threatened species of plant life in America. There is nothing wrong with that. We need to protect God's creation, and many Americans have gone out of their way to protect animal life and plant life. However, there is one species that has been grossly overlooked by those who would protect life. America has failed to protect human life. We have failed to protect human life. Ever since the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision in 1973 which legalized abortion in America, more than 50,000,000 babies have been aborted. That's 4,000 a day! How would we react if there were 4,000 casualties in Afghanistan every day? We'd be appalled and we'd call for something to be done to stop the killing!

The word "*sanctity*" means "*the quality of being holy or sacred.*" Put simply, then, the sanctity of human life means that human life should be and is to be set apart from all other life—human life is unique. Above all other life forms, human life is more worthy to be protected and defended.

How is human life set apart from other life? I want to go to the highest authority—our creator God from His word. **READ Psalm 139:13-18.** Let me begin by saying 3 things:

1. God Loves Life. There are many passages in God's Word that say God loves life! The Prophet Jeremiah said, "*The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.'*" **Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV).**

The beloved Apostle John said, "*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*" **1 John 4:10 (NIV).** Since God formed us and created us, He values us highly. And certainly Jesus made it clear that He came to give life - "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" (**John 10:10b NIV**). God cherishes life, He honors life, He sanctifies life.

2. Man is Bent on Destroying Life. Almost from day one, man has struggled with choosing death over life and we've placed less and less value on life.

The first death recorded in the Bible is a murder of one brother by another. "*Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.*" **Genesis 4:8 (NIV).**

And over time, our society has become more and more violent. Movies, video games, and TV shows have become very violent. So how does a Christian live with a view of sanctify of life in this kind of culture?

3. Christians are Called to Respond—Our call as Christians is to do the right thing. **Micah 6:8 (NIV)** "*And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*"

Our call as Christians is to come to the rescue of those who are being led to death. **Proverbs 24:1 (NIV)** *“Rescue those being led away to death, hold back those staggering toward slaughter.”* Our Call as Christians is to speak up for the victims of abortion. **Proverbs 31:8 (NIV)** *“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.”*

This morning, as we celebrate the Sanctity of Human Life, I want us to look to God’s Word to see why human life is to be cherished and defended. I want us to understand why we should celebrate life, not destroy it. Why do we need to look to God’s Word for these things? Well, for one, more and more people have become convinced that their answers, their solutions, and their viewpoints are superior to God’s. In fact, more and more people are convinced that there is no God to answer to. Therefore, more and more people believe that it’s their right to decide when someone’s life is no longer useful. And once we start deciding that the unborn, or the disabled, or the elderly, or the terminally ill are only problems to us, and have no intrinsic value, then it becomes all too easy for us to dispose of them.

But God loves life, and as mankind continues to drift further and further away from God’s ideals, God’s heart breaks for He says, *“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* **Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)**

Secondly, we should look to God’s Word to see what He says about human life because He is the one who created it. In **Genesis 1:26 (NIV)** God said, *“Let us make man in our image...”*

Humans are uniquely created by God in the image of God and that is what makes us special and valuable to Him. No one, not even if you have an identical twin is, or will ever be just like you? You were created as a one-of-a-kind special person!

We are not biological accidents. We didn’t arrive on this planet as the result of some big bang that scattered cosmic dust down to earth and then that stuff somehow mutated into life. If that is how human life came to be, then it’s pretty easy to see why life would not be so valuable. If God did not create us, then why should we be concerned about the morality of taking the life of an unborn child? If we have no God to answer to, then we can do whatever we want with our bodies, because God doesn’t exist!

But God does exist and we have life because of His divine choice and His divine love for us. All human life is sacred!

This morning, I want to share with you God’s invitation to life. I’ll spell it out for you in the word L-I-F-E.

L - Likeness – The Psalmist said, *“For you created my inmost being”* **Psalms 139:13 (NIV)**. He understood that he wasn’t here by chance, that he had been created by God. I read part of Genesis 1:26 to you earlier, let me read the rest of it. *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”* **Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)**. The word translated *“image”* is the Hebrew word, *“tselem”* or the Latin word *“imago Dei”* which means a resemblance – a representative figure – a likeness. How are we created in the likeness of God?

1. In Our Personality: Our mind, our will, and our emotions were created in the likeness of God. God thinks, we think. God decides, we decide. God feels, we feel.

2. In Our Sexuality: God chose to create and separate mankind into male and female. A quote from a recent Focus on the Family article says that these two sexes are “*wholly complementary to each other, yet each one uniquely and mysteriously bears God’s likeness. It is in this likeness that we humans are called to make visible the invisible Creator God on this planet.*”

Thus, it is out of the diversity and distinctive separateness of male and female that we humans are called to not only represent God in the proper and ordered stewardship of His good and wonderful creation, but to come together in complementary unity and be joined as “one flesh” in order to bring forth new life that will also bear the likeness of God.” (Focus on the Family Action, CitizenLink Daily: “Casting God’s Vision for Sex and Sexuality”)

3. In Our Morality: God created human beings as moral beings, with a moral conscience which is born of God. Our moral nature includes both freedom of choice and responsibility for our choices. Because of this freedom and the introduction of sin into the world, man chose to sin and is therefore has been rendered unlike God in morality. **Romans 3:10 (NIV)** “*There is no one righteous, not even one.*” **Romans 3:23 (NIV)** “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” However, being created as moral beings, humans still have the potential to live up to the morality which God intended. That potential lies in the person of Jesus Christ, who is “*...the (perfect) image of the invisible God....*” **Colossians 1:15 (NIV)**. In order for sinful man to exist more fully in the moral image of God, he must conform to the likeness of Christ. “*And we...are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*” **2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)**

4. In Our Spirituality: God uniquely created man with the ability to relate to Him - to live in a close, personal, and intimate relationship with Him. Plant life has a visible outward living frame, and animal life has bodies, but neither have a soul or a spirit. Therefore, no other life is made in the same way as humans. And, yet some among us dare to believe that some human life is not worthy to be lived.

According to a 2004 survey of 1209 abortion patents conducted by the Guttmacher Institute, the reasons most frequently cited for having abortions were 1) Baby would interfere with a woman’s education, work or ability to care for dependents. 2) Could not afford a baby now. 3) Unwilling to be a single mother or was having relationship problems. 4) They had completed their childbearing. 5) Not ready to have a child. 6) Parents’ or partners’ desire. 7) Didn’t want others to know they had sex or got pregnant. 8) Immaturity. 9) Possible health problems of fetus or mother. 10) Victim of rape or incest. The conclusion was that 95-98% of these abortions were for convenience sake. (Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 2005, 37(3):110–118)

What these Americans are saying is that in many cases, some lives are not worthy to be lived because they don't believe or have forgotten that every human life is created in the likeness and image of God. The next letter in L-I-F-E is:

I - Intricate - Psalm 139:13b-14a (NIV) *“You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made . . .”* When does life begin? Dr. Hymie Gordon, the former chairman of the Department of Genetics at the Mayo Clinic is on record as saying, *“By all the criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of conception.”* *“Modern science sees that the fetus is a patient, an individual.”* (lifeneews.com and naplesnews.com). What follows is a summary of the developmental landmarks of a normal pregnancy. I give them to you to emphasize the intricacy of human life:
Conception - At conception, the sperm joins with ovum (egg) to form a single cell that contains the complex genetic blueprint for every detail of human development. The unborn child at this stage is called a zygote until it reaches the uterus.

Week 2 - Child's sex, hair and eye color, height, and skin tone are already determined.

Week 4 - Heart can be seen beating by ultrasound, and has been beating since week 3. The beginning of the spinal cord, muscles, and nerves develop. Arms, legs, eyes and ears start to form.

Week 6 - Head, mouth, intestines, and liver begin to take shape. The eyes begin to form and the extremities can be seen in much more detail, including all ten fingers.

Week 9 - Facial features, limbs, hands, feet, fingers, and toes become apparent. The nervous system is responsive and many of the internal organs begin to function. The baby is able to grasp and can suck his/her thumb. Fingerprints are visible in the skin. In addition to being able to sense touch, the baby can now feel pain.

Week 14 - The mother can feel energetic movement, and hair is visible on the scalp. Eyelids, fingernails, and toenails also form.

Week 18 - The child blinks, grasps, and moves mouth. The ears are now functioning and the baby can hear the mother's voice.

Week 26 - The tongue has formed taste buds and the eyes have fully developed. The baby's lungs are completely functioning. If this baby were to be born prematurely, the child would have a good chance of survival with sufficient medical care.

Week 30 - The baby is usually capable of living outside the womb and would be considered premature at birth. Vision, hearing, taste, and touch are all being used now. The baby opens and closes eyes and looks around.

Week 40 - This marks the end of the normal gestational period. The baby is now ready for life outside of mother's womb.

(Source: Focus on the Family Heartlink – “The First Nine Months of Life”). Most abortions happen around week seven.

Dr. Gordon also stated, *“The complexity of the zygote itself is so great that it is beyond our comprehension. In a short nine months' time, one fertilized ovum grows into six thousand million cells that become a living, breathing person like you.”* This shows that not only does human life bear the likeness of God; it is also intricate – meaning it is complicated, complex and full of details. The intricate details of human life reveal the complex nature of our creator and designer God. That’s why we must do the right thing and rescue those being led to death, and speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves. The next letter in L-I-F-E is:

F - Foreknowledge – God made us, knows us and has a purpose and plan for us. **Psalm 139:16b (NIV)** says, *“All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.* And in **Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)** God says, *“I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* If you want to know the purpose of life, you are not going to find it in a talk show or self-help book. You have to talk to the creator who created you and look in the owner’s manual of life - His book. It says you were made by God, you were made for God. God made you to love you and He made you to love you forever. And until you understand that, life, with all its ups and downs problems and pinnacles isn’t going to make sense.

We were planned for God’s purpose, to bring Him enjoyment, to have a relationship with Him. He has a plan and purpose for everyone. Finally, the last letter in L-I-F-E is:

E - Eternal Psalm 139:17-18 (NIV) *“How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.”* God made us to live forever and we can communicate with an eternal God. He invites us to know Him. What other kind of god does that? None, because you can’t find them. You don’t know where they are. But God says, *“Come to Me. Learn of me, for I am always with you.”*

There are those who say it’s okay or acceptable to take the life of someone because of inconvenience, disabilities or old age. And when we do that, we are sending a message that some lives are not valuable. We are communicating helplessness, not compassion to those who need it.

The truth is, only God has a right to determine when we stop living. **Job 12:10 (NIV)** says, *“In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of mankind.”* All of life is valuable no matter how young or old because God creates it and sustains it in His own image for His purpose.

36 years ago, Elaine’s Mom found out she was pregnant with their third child. This was the same year Elaine and I were getting married. It was quite a surprise to us all, and it was a concern to us because her mom was 38 and wasn’t in the best of health.

A few days after the news spread that Elaine’s Mom was expecting; Elaine’s Aunt Nell, who wasn’t a Christian, came to see Mary Ruth. She told her that she ought to just have an abortion because she too was concerned about her health. Well, Elaine’s Mom wouldn’t hear of it – it wasn’t even in her thought process to end her pregnancy with an abortion. She knew that physically, having another child would be tough. She knew

that raising another child would be tough emotionally because she thought she had her child-raising years behind her, and she was looking forward to the empty nest. But she was determined to have this child. In fact, she jokingly called this baby her “*fall crop*” and went on with the pregnancy.

In August of 1974, Wade was born, and he became the delight of the whole family. In fact, we spoiled him rotten and he knows it! Today, Wade is an ordained minister, and has served the Lord as a Youth Minister in several churches.

But here is the point I want to make. About 7 years ago, Elaine’s other brother, Mike had written an Easter play, and it was being performed at our home church, Ridgeway Baptist in LaFayette, GA. We took a group from my former church to see the play, and as we were waiting for the play to begin, Elaine punched me and said, “*Steve, look who is walking in the door. It’s Aunt Nell.*” We were so surprised to see her because, quite frankly, Nell never liked church or preachers or religion all that much. Furthermore, by this time, Nell was getting on up there in years, and was in bad health herself. But there she was, attending this Easter Play about the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

Well, during the invitation, to our further surprise, we looked up and there was Aunt Nell walking down the aisle. As she made her way to the altar, guess who met her there? It was Wade. The very one whom she had suggested some 28 years earlier should be aborted, was now the witness who was leading her to Christ.

Because Elaine’s Mom refused to be inconvenienced by an unplanned pregnancy – because she refused to listen to the plea of popular opinion – because she stood up for what was right and carried her child full term, when Aunt Nell passed away six weeks later, she was ready to meet the Lord. Aunt Nell is in heaven today, no doubt thanking the Lord that her sister-in-law didn’t listen to her when she was telling her that she ought to just abort that baby.

Folks, that is why we must do the right thing. That is why we must rescue those who are being led to death. That is why we must speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Someone’s eternity may depend on it. We must stand for life! If we will not stand on this issue, what will we stand for? If we don’t stand now, when will we stand? And if we don’t stand, who will?

Conclusion: Our birth marks the beginning of a life which will never end. It is not a question of if we will live forever; it is a question of where we will live for eternity - With God in Heaven or separated from God in Hell. Don’t come to the end of your life having never accepted God’s invitation to life. The invitation to eternal life stands – Jesus says in **John 11:25 (NIV)** “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.*” You can begin that relationship with God right now through Christ and become a part of His family. “*Yet to all who receive Him, to those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.*” **John 1:12 (NIV)** What is your choice. Do you want to live? Do you want life?

If you want life, then come to Jesus for He said in **John 14:6 (NIV)** “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*”