

Pro-Life Basics

Sharing the Truth with Love

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1.

How to Have Productive Dialogue About Abortion

There is one aspect of being pro-life that applies to everyone equally. Whether your focus is legislation, sidewalk advocacy, pregnancy clinic work, or any other aspect of this movement, we all have people we know who believe for one reason or another that we need legal abortion.

This person may never have brought it up before, but I guarantee it's going to come up. The *Dobbs* case is something that everyone has an opinion on, one way or another, and you might just be the person they bring it up with.

I'm thrilled that *Dobbs* went the way that it did, but we can't be blind to the fact that, in general, conversations about abortion are going to be a *lot* more contentious as we move forward.

People who have grown up believing that abortion isn't really killing a person, that it's just a mundane procedure that's a normal part of women's health, are going to be angry. And, as we shall discuss, that anger is actually pretty understandable when you know *why* they think that way.

The fact is, we *all* need to know how to handle these abrupt and unexpected conversations. Maybe you're not a full-time apologist or a speaker or a teacher. That's fine. You don't have to be. But when a friend or family member springs this question on you, you'd better be able to give a halfway decent answer that lets them walk away knowing that pro-lifers care about the lives of children *and* mothers *and* fathers, and that we want to help *all* of them. We *also* want to help people who have *had* abortions. We want to help them find healing and peace, and we do so without judgment. At minimum, the person you're talking to should be able to walk away thinking, "Well, maybe pro-lifers are wrong, but at least they're trying to do the right thing." Or, even better, "Maybe the pro-lifers are right; those answers made a lot more sense than I expected; maybe I'll have to think about this more and have another conversation later."

It's surprisingly common for these conversations to come up, and you don't need to be a professional to field them. You just have to have the right attitude, some basic facts, and the willingness to see the humanity and dignity of the people you're talking to, even if they're being rude or angry.

So, what will you do? What will you do when the next Fourth of July or Thanksgiving or Christmas celebration gets political and Aunt Rhonda and Uncle Ned start talking about how these blasted pro-lifers are going to get women killed in back alleys, and then it comes out that you're pro-life, thus making you the focus of their outrage about the hundreds of thousands they think are going to die because of people like *you*. How will you respond?

Well, a good place to start is to put the humanity back in human interaction. Our modern culture trains people to react to disagreement with all the poise and of grace a caffeine-addicted chihuahua. And as easy as it is to point to the other side of such a disagreement and say, “*They’re* the ones who overreacted,” the fact is that we *all* have a tendency to see things only from our own point of view, making it easy to conclude – whether we admit it to ourselves or not – that we think the other side is just dumb.

While that may be true from time to time, most often – and most realistically – the other side is simply misinformed. People may be intelligent, logical, compassionate, and even quite reasonable in their thinking, but still come to the wrong conclusion because they’re working with incomplete or false data. Understanding this and having the humility to admit that we’d probably do the same if we were in their shoes is the first step to fostering healthy dialogue.

2.

Where Do the Myths About Abortion Come From?

A lie repeated often enough and compellingly enough easily becomes regarded as common knowledge. When skilled people are involved, it doesn't even take that long.

For example, there is a very common myth about Poland in World War II that many of you were probably taught in school. The myth is that Polish cavalry armed with lances charged a force of German tanks, were largely slaughtered by the Germans, and were then shocked to discover the tanks were, in fact, made of metal and not cardboard.

This myth has shown up in history textbooks – including some I had in school – all across the US, the UK, and France. During WWII, it featured heavily in newspapers – a story of a brave but quaint people dying in a hopeless fight.

It's also 100% false. In truth, Polish cavalry was modernized, armed with anti-tank rifles and light artillery, and was actually very effective in hit-and-run mobile warfare. In the battle where the myth was born, they inflicted heavy casualties on the invading troops before withdrawing in good order after accomplishing their objective.

So, if that's what *really* happened, then where did the myth come from? Well, wartime Nazi propaganda. The Nazis made the story up, staged bodies to make it look legitimate, and printed it in Axis newspapers. The propaganda that was then, horrifyingly enough, repeated by newspapers in Britain and France – Poland's *allies* – and later in America.

Now, that was a lie concocted in a matter of days, reinforced over weeks, and then repeated as "fact" for decades, to the point that it is only now being expunged from the general perception many decades later.

The reason I bring this up is to point out that even a relatively small lie told by people who no one should have believed has *still* had power even into the present day.

Now let's consider abortion.

For more than fifty continuous years, powerful and influential people have lied, fabricated data, and created a false but highly compelling narrative painting abortion as a natural right essential to women's liberation.

It started with Larry Lader and Bernard Nathanson – founders of the abortion giant NARAL – who fabricated wild statistics about supposed thousands of women dying each year from back-alley abortions. This was contradicted by all the hard evidence, which showed *dozens* of these tragic deaths each year, not thousands. Yes, even one is too many, but thousands of women were *not* dying from illegal abortion. Nathanson – who later became pro-life – ultimately testified that they *knew* they were lying, and that they *intentionally lied* because they believed their cause *justified* it. (More on this later).

Lader and Nathanson took these falsified numbers to influential feminist leaders like Betty Friedan, who was initially opposed to abortion... until they convinced her their statistics were real. Mainstream feminism was originally staunchly *against* abortion, but Friedan and other converts to their ideology forced a policy change in the feminist National Organization for Women (NOW) to *support* abortion. They forced out any and all feminists who dissented, and – at Nathanson’s and Lader’s prompting – painted abortion as supposedly “essential” to feminism and women’s liberation.

Early rhetoric painted the unborn as “not human.” When the scientific reality of the humanity of the unborn became undeniable to all who knew the biology, rhetoric shifted to claiming they were “not people,” and that, even if they *were* people, mitigating circumstances like preventing deaths from back-alley abortions, protecting women’s rights and bodily autonomy, and stopping old white men from controlling women’s bodies would still make abortion essential.

More than fifty years of careful, compelling, and highly popularized rhetoric has convinced several generations of people that outlawing abortion would kill hundreds of thousands of women in back alleys, would strip away their reproductive rights, would let the government control women’s bodies, and do all of this for scraps of tissue that probably aren’t even people, all because some angry white pro-life men want to punish women for having sex.

That’s the narrative.

3.

People Deserve the Truth.

Now, take yourself out of the pro-life mindset for a minute and consider this from the other side: wouldn't it make sense that pro-lifers would look like the bad guys? In truth, if I believed this narrative, I'd be hostile to pro-lifers too, and I think most of us could say the same.

The myth of Polish lancers charging tanks became common “knowledge” thanks to a handful of talented liars convincing other people to repeat their lies for decades. The myth has survived the regime that spawned it by nearly eighty years.

The abortion lobby has had more public trust, more resources, more international reach, and plenty of time to double-down on *their* lies. These days, the myths often don't originate with people deliberately lying like Lader and Nathanson, but with people who grew up believing the *initial* lies and now are searching for evidence and logical arguments to support what they already believe is an obvious truth.

Further, and I cannot emphasize this enough, there's a very good chance that the person you're talking to has either *had* an abortion or is very close to someone who has. **Realistically, we all know someone who has had an abortion, even if we aren't aware of who specifically that person may be. We must have sensitivity to that trauma, and always bear in mind that the person you're talking with might have had an abortion without knowing what an abortion really is.**

For so many – perhaps even a majority – of women who've had an abortion, it played out something like this: she did not believe at any conscious level that it was a child. Perhaps she thought it was human, might even have said 'baby', but as far as she was told, as far as she knew, so far as her *doctors* and *friends* told her, it wasn't *really* a person. **Not really a baby.** Something that might *become* a person, a baby, but wasn't *yet*, and wouldn't be for a while.

So far as she knew, she'd be stopping the process before it became a person. As far as why she had the abortion, well, she was in some bad circumstances. Poverty, trauma, a broken relationship, fear, panic, outright *coercion* could all have played a role. To her, abortion was presented as an easy solution. **Moreso, it was presented as the only solution. Her only choice.**

She went in for a simple tissue removal, or for something she thought she *had* to do because she had no other option, **no other choice.** So, she went in, but... if what you're telling her is true... then it wasn't just a simple tissue removal. It was killing her own innocent son or daughter.

Stop and think about the gravity of what that means for that woman you're talking to who's had an abortion. For that matter, think about the gravity of what that means for the man whose wife or girlfriend or daughter had an abortion.

Let that sink in, and let it restrain *you* – and *all* of us – from rushing to judgment. Moral culpability is hard and complex. Someone who *doesn't* know that what they're doing is harmful, or who is being coerced into doing it, does not bear the same culpability as someone who both *knows* it's harmful *and* does it willingly. Learning the *truth*, when you hadn't known it before, would be an unspeakably painful realization to come to. If *you* thought you were just going in for a normal medical procedure, and then *years later* someone told you it was killing a person – *your child* in fact – *you* would not want to believe that. It would be natural for you to grasp desperately at *any* explanation that would say, “No, that's not true.”

Women and men deserve to know the truth about abortion. They deserve to know, both so that they don't *have* or *encourage* abortions, but also so that, if they *have* had abortions, they can find healing. Many people who've had abortions suffer an unknown, unnamed, or unacknowledged trauma from past abortions, and only find relief, healing, and forgiveness when they are able to understand and face what really happened.

If that is you, or someone you know, we want to help! We want to provide that healing, that relief, that peace.

People deserve the truth... but we *have* to have compassion when we give it to them.

This is the reality of abortion dialogue in the modern era – a series of conversations in which we are up against half a century of very personal, very compelling, very organized, and – to many – largely unquestioned “common knowledge.” Yes, this “common knowledge” is based on falsehood. But it's a *convincing* falsehood repeated to the point of being normalized and mundane, with we who oppose it being portrayed as a vast and faceless horde of angry, sexist men with nothing better to do than police women's sex lives and make them feel guilty about something that is “not a person.”

Not exactly a happy prospect.

But there is good news in the midst of all of this. The pro-choice worldview is a large one encompassing many different elements, but its very size also means it's hard to defend. When we help people see the flaws in the common pro-choice arguments, they start to question the lies abortion is built on, and their view can start to change.

4.

Humanizing Yourself to Humanize the Vulnerable

One of the best ways to start is by building rapport – by showing respect for the person on the other side of the issue, finding common ground and helping them see that you, in fact, care. You’re not like the misogynistic and short-sighted caricature of pro-lifers that is so pervasive in pop culture.

Building rapport and seeking to understand the other person while building common ground is good advice in any sort of disagreement, but it’s doubly important in the abortion conversation because the common portrayal of pro-life people is so negative that often people don’t think we’re worth listening to. This isn’t always the case, but it’s very common for people to think we can’t be trusted. And, from their perspective, that makes sense.

After all, pro-lifers are portrayed as sexist religious zealots who don’t care about women and have broken moral compasses. *Why would anyone listen to us if we were truly like that?*

Building rapport through common ground and kindness not only helps the other person *want* to talk to us in an unguarded way, but it also breaks down stereotypes; it helps them treat us like we’re worth listening to. *Helping them see our moral compasses are not broken is key if we want to convince them that our position is morally correct.*

One of the best ways to do this is by establishing common ground, which is actually easier than you might think.

Finding Common Ground

All people have some basic things they hold in common; it’s just a matter of finding and shining a light on those things.

First, listen to their reasons and concerns. If they don’t tell you outright why they’re pro-choice, ask a polite clarification question like, “I want to understand where *you’re* coming from. People are pro-choice for lots of reasons, and I want to make sure I’m responding to *you* and not to a stereotype. Would you please tell me why you’re pro-choice?” This helps you get to the core of their reasoning – vital in *any* dialogue on morality – and also establishes that you’re intellectually honest; it makes it clear that you want dialogue with *them*, the real person, and not battle a strawman.

Constantly ask clarification questions, especially over terminology. For example: “When you say X, what do you mean by that?” or “Please correct me if I’m wrong; it sounds like you’re saying Y. Is that right, or am I not understanding?”

Consider the reasons they give you. Maybe they’re concerned about women in poverty. Maybe they think that legislation restricting abortion is government overreach. Maybe they’re concerned about back-alley abortions.

Respond to these concerns in a way that affirms the concern and highlights areas of agreement. Build on that common ground, and only *then* move on to a counterpoint.

For example, let's say I'm talking to a pro-choice woman who says she thinks we need abortion because of poverty. Well, that's an easy point of common ground because we *all* agree that we want to help people in poverty, so I can share my genuine agreement by saying something like this:

"I hear you; poverty is a serious issue, especially generational poverty where people are born in hard circumstances and find it difficult to break the cycle. The economy is in shambles, inflation is rampant, and people are suffering. I want to fix that. But I also think there are some things we could do to try to solve it that would be *wrong*, would be *unjust*."

Then I continue with:

"Let's imagine for a second that there's a woman with a toddler. She's incredibly poor, and is struggling to feed herself, even more so to feed her child. Worse, let's imagine they're living in a war-torn country, or an area devastated by a natural disaster, so when they go to social services or local charities, they hear, 'We're so sorry, but we have so many people coming to us for help that we don't have the supplies to help everyone. We can help you in a few months, if you can just hold out until then.' This woman is in a hard, tragic situation; there's going to be a lot of struggling, and she's not sure how it will turn out. She doesn't know what kind of future her child is going to have – maybe things will get better, but at that moment she doesn't have much hope.

"Still, as tragic as that situation is, I think it would be obviously wrong if she were to kill her toddler, even if she was trying to save the toddler from suffering. Her child's life matters, he has *rights*, and just because she can't see any hope for the future doesn't mean there's no hope, nor does it mean it would be okay to kill her child.

"Now, I have a view that might seem strange. I think that the fetus is a person with the same rights and moral status as you or me, so I think that killing a fetus is just as wrong as killing a toddler.* Maybe you disagree – and if so I'd love to talk about it – but that's what I believe, and I have pretty good reasons for thinking that. To be clear, I don't think that the woman getting an abortion is the same sort of person as one who would kill her toddler; moral culpability is *way* more complicated than that. But I do think that the unborn child is just as much a person as the born one, and that's why I'm against abortion. The whole reason I want to help people get out of poverty is because I believe human life has value, so I think we should do everything we can to help get people out of poverty, but we shouldn't kill people who are poor to do it. So, what do you think? How would you respond to this perspective?"

Notice how I affirm her concerns and outline my honest area of agreement with a little bit of insight into my worldview. Then I use a pro-life technique called **Trotting Out the Toddler**, in which I create a parallel scenario involving a toddler instead of a fetus. (It's worth noting that Trotting Out the Toddler is not, itself, an argument against abortion, but rather a way to help them see your line of reasoning).

Then I acknowledge that my view that fetuses are people may seem strange – and, from their perspective, it does – but note that I have reasons for it and would be happy to discuss them later. I then state my view – fetuses are people, and so elective abortion is wrong because it kills innocent people – before tying it back to her original concern – that of poverty.

Importantly, I make it clear that I am *NOT* suggesting that a woman who has an abortion is like a woman who killed a toddler. While the fetus's life is just as valuable, context *does* affect moral culpability. Consider that there is a difference between accidentally running someone over with your car because he jumped in front of you, versus driving along, seeing a guy, and deliberately speeding up to kill him. In both cases, an equally valuable person dies, but the moral culpability is wildly different. Obviously, this *isn't* an analogy to abortion; this is just to emphasize that context affects culpability. There is a sliding scale between “not culpable at all” and “completely culpable.” As we discussed, a majority of women who have abortions are likely much closer to “not culpable” than they are to “completely culpable.”

After making that critical point clear, I conclude my short case stating why I think abortion is wrong even in the context of her concern, while still reaffirming that her concern is legitimate. Then I give the floor to her so that she can consider this new idea and respond to it in an organic fashion.

This type of response accomplishes several things – it establishes that I am listening to her and respect her, that I also care about human rights, and that I'm acting in good faith. It makes a clear case why I think abortion is wrong while still respecting her concerns. It naturally sets up for an exploration of other areas of disagreement without launching straight into a philosophical diatribe right then. It gives her a moment to digest what I've said and puts the ball back in her court, giving her the chance to respond, ask questions, counter my point, or in some other fashion indicate where the conversation needs to go next.

***Establishing fetal personhood will be covered under 'Personhood and the Equal Rights Argument'**

There's no way I could ever cover all the types of common ground that you could find, but the basic principle applies across the board: find out what concerns them, find whatever part of it you agree with, highlight the agreement, and politely voice your own concern back while still maintaining the element you agree on. Build mutual respect and rapport.

5.

Abortions In the Case of Rape

But what about the case of rape? This question comes up in just about every conversation I have about abortion, and I'm sad to say that I don't think many pro-lifers address this question well. It's common for well-meaning pro-lifers to respond by pointing out that abortions in the case of rape account for a very small percentage of all abortions; I did this myself at one time.

But that's a *horrible* way to respond. It comes across as *callous* and *totally uncompassionate* to very real women who are suffering from very real traumas. Too often, pro-life people fall into what's referred to as "fetus tunnel vision" where it seems like the only thing they care about is the fetus. This is bad, whether in the context of talking about rape or about any other human tragedy. We *should* be able to feel for other tragedies; it's unhealthy if we can't. *If we can't acknowledge there are grave human tragedies and traumas other than abortion, then we shouldn't be doing this work in the first place.* There is a deep woundedness that needs to be healed if one can't care about these other tragedies.

I think Steve Wagner of Justice For All put it best: **"When a pro-choice person brings up the issue of rape, they're not terribly concerned at that point if the unborn is human. They want to find out whether you're human."**

So, when someone brings up abortion in the case of rape, I'm *not* going to start with apologetics or philosophy. I'm going to start with compassion for people who have been assaulted this way, mindful that I *know* people who have suffered this. **I don't script this sort of thing, but these are the kinds of things I bring up.** I want you to learn these things because, whether or not you're talking about abortion, this is the ugly truth about rape, and you need to be able to talk about it. Really be informed; *internalize* it. Let yourself be angry about it – and *say* as much – because rape *is* a *vile* and *violent* thing.

Rape is one of the worst things I know of. Frankly, our society doesn't address rape seriously enough. The way that people often talk about rape puts the blame on the survivor by saying awful things like "well, if she hadn't gone to that party," or "well, if she hadn't worn that," as though the guy who *attacked* her had no choice or fault in the matter. It implies it's all the woman's fault while placing absolutely NO responsibility on the *vile* person who committed an EVIL, VIOLENT ACT AGAINST HER. Instead of looking at *her* actions, why don't we say, "IF ONLY HE HADN'T ATTACKED HER!"

This is wrong, and while I feel like our society is in some ways getting better about having conversations about this lately, there is so much more we need to do, like actually sentencing convicted rapists to *real* jail time and not the 3 to 5 years that they often get before they're back on the street!

We need to make sure that every city has the necessary resources to process rape kits, instead of leaving thousands on the shelves like a lot of cities have done. **Rape is one of the most horrific crimes there is, but I don't think enough people comprehend the true, brutal evil of sexual assault.**

After I've shared my feelings and thoughts on this, I'll sometimes just leave it there and let the other person respond. Sometimes, the thing the other person needs most in that moment is just to know that you honestly *care*. (And, again, if you don't care... you shouldn't be talking about abortion). *If* the person still wants to talk about abortion and rape, and says perhaps, "We agree that rape is awful, so shouldn't abortion be legal in those cases?" *then* I will respond with something like this:

"Let's imagine that a woman is raped and becomes pregnant, and she decides not to have an abortion. Some women do decide not to have an abortion after becoming pregnant from rape. The woman carries the pregnancy to term, and she gives birth to a baby boy. As months go by, things are going as well as they can be. She's getting therapy, she has a supportive community coming around her in these hard times, and thankfully the rapist is in prison where he belongs. Healing is slow, but she *is* healing... until her son turns two. Around the age of two, the baby's face starts to change. Unfortunately, he begins to look like his biological father. He looks like the rapist.

"Now things are getting rapidly worse for her; she's having flashbacks every day, and nightmares every night. She's constantly around her son, and her trauma gets so bad that she starts to hate her son, to the point where she wants

to KILL HER SON, because she's so desperate and traumatized, and she thinks it's the only thing that will give her relief.

"This is an extremely traumatic experience; I don't want *any* woman to be in that situation, *ever*. But I don't think she should be allowed to kill her son.

"We should surround this woman with love, with support, with resources, with counseling, with everything we can possibly do to help her, and I don't think she should have to pay a *dime*. We should do everything in our power to help her. Nothing will ever undo what happened, it's true, but we can still do the best we can and really help her to heal and thrive. We should do just about anything for her *EXCEPT KILL THE CHILD*. We cannot do that.

"So, let's go back to abortion. I have this view that the toddler in that story and a fetus are both people with the same rights and moral status. IF and *only* IF I'm right about that—IF the unborn is as equally valuable as the toddler—then we shouldn't kill the unborn, just like we shouldn't kill the toddler in the case of rape.

"That doesn't mean that I don't care about the woman; it means we cannot kill. We *cannot* and *should not* compound one tragedy with another."

There are other things that we can bring up in a conversation like this; one that I basically always bring up is the existence of healing and recovery programs like SRT Services, which specializes in treating sexually related trauma, including unwanted pregnancy, abortion trauma, rape and sexual assault trauma, and more. (It's also free). **Whether the woman became pregnant or not, whether she had an abortion or carried to term or is still pregnant, I want her to receive help, love, and support in ALL of her struggles.**

We all agree that rape is a horrific and unjust act of violence against an innocent person: the woman. But I don't think it is right to commit a second act of violence against another innocent person in order to try to solve an already traumatic situation.

Two Main Arguments

The two most common objections to the pro-life position are that the embryo or fetus isn't a person (even though its biologically human), and that the woman's right to her own bodily autonomy demands that abortion be legal even if the embryo or fetus *is* a person. Many people you talk to will hold both of these views simultaneously at some level. They usually don't think the fetus is a person, but they also have this sense that, even if it is, bodily autonomy supersedes it.

What I find interesting about both of these arguments is that they both end up dealing with rights. The personhood disagreement generally assumes that people have rights; it simply doesn't think the unborn are people. The bodily autonomy argument is entirely focused on a woman's right to control her own body.

Incidentally, both give you common ground with the pro-choice person – we are big on human rights too; that's the whole reason we're adamantly pro-life after all – *and* it also gives you a natural direction to take the conversation: human rights. We'll cover both personhood and bodily autonomy, but in both cases please keep the centrality of the right to life in mind.

Personhood and the Equal Rights Argument

Most people who are pro-choice don't think the fetus or embryo is a person, and, if that belief were true, that would pretty well solve the abortion debate. After all, what's the big deal if it's not a person?

The biggest problem with the argument that denies the personhood of the fetus is that, in order to exclude *unborn* humans as persons, the pro-choice individual either has to *exclude* some *born* humans too – humans who we less controversially consider 'persons' – or else *include* creatures that clearly *aren't* persons. The best argument for exposing this problem is called, aptly, the Equal Rights Argument.

As an important sidenote, a critical **clarification question** often comes up here. Often a person will say, “I don’t think the fetus is really human.” It would be perfectly reasonable for a pro-life person to respond with talking about science, because biology is pretty clear (it is, indeed, a human) and it *sounds* like that’s the point of disagreement. However, many pro-choice people *really* mean “I don’t think it’s a *person*,” and use ‘human’ and ‘person’ interchangeably.

When a person says, “I don’t think the fetus is really human,” ask the following clarification: “I want to make sure I understand you. When you say it’s not a human, do you mean ‘It’s not *biologically* human,’ or, ‘It’s not a *person*?’”

Once it’s clear we’re talking about personhood, I’ll start with saying something such as:

“Maybe before we get too deep into talking about whether or not the human fetus is a person with rights, we need to talk about equal rights for people in general. After all, we don’t want to be reasoning backward – having the conclusion and then justifying it. And, frankly, if we don’t have the same view on personhood and equal rights in less controversial areas – like human adults for example – we’d probably need to address *that* difference before we could get anywhere talking about the fetus.”

When framed this way, most people will agree to take this little detour:

“Every human who has been born is someone we clearly consider a person, yet all humans are very different – different sexes, different ethnicities, different sizes, different ages, different tastes, different skills and abilities. Yet all of us are equal people with equal rights, including an equal right to life.

“Further, we know that not all creatures belong in that “Equal Right to Life Club.” Squirrels, for example, don’t have the same equal right to life that we do. That’s not to say they have *no* rights, but if I were to pass a roadkill squirrel, I might feel a little sad for the squirrel, but I won’t stop my car and give the squirrel CPR after calling 911. If I were to pass a *toddler* who’d been hit by a car, though, you’d better believe I’d be desperately trying to save her life while screaming for an ambulance.

“So, there must be something that makes people with equal rights different from other creatures that don’t have the same rights. It must *also* be something that all of us have *equally*. As we said, all humans are different from each other – often *very* different – yet we all have the same rights. We couldn’t say the reason is something like “how physically strong you are,” because not all people are equally physically strong. Whatever qualifies us for the “Equal Right to Life Club” must be something a creature either *has* or *doesn’t have*, equally and to the same degree.

“To put it another way, we need an answer that explains why human adults, teens, toddlers, and newborns have an equal right to life, but squirrels don’t.”

In a conversation, I will usually ask the other person to offer some possibilities for what that thing might be. If the person doesn’t have any theories, I’ll offer some of the more common ones. I’ll also say up front that most explanations fail. For example:

*“Intelligence, or any other property we have to different degrees, can’t explain why we all have an equal right to life because we’re not all equally intelligent. If you don’t believe me, you can pick a random video on YouTube and scroll through the comments section; it’ll be pretty obvious we’re *not* all equally intelligent.*

“Consciousness or self-awareness is another common answer, but it doesn’t account for why newborn babies or someone in a temporary and reversible coma would have rights. After all, a newborn isn’t self-aware yet, and a person in a medically induced coma isn’t either, but it’s pretty obvious that it would be wrong to kill a newborn baby or a person in a reversible coma.

“Sentience – the ability to experience sensation or feeling – is also a common answer, but fails for the opposite reason: it would make squirrels people, too. Sci-fi often erroneously uses the word “sentience” to mean something like a human-style intellect, but it actually only refers to very basic sensory awareness. In fact, most critters you see are sentient.”

“Try out as many answers as you want, but if it’s based on some present ability – in other words, something we can do right now – it will inevitably exclude some born humans or include squirrels.

“The clearest answer that explains why all *born* humans are people (and squirrels aren’t) is that something like our human nature gives us equal rights. This will be guaranteed to include all humans, no matter their sex, ethnicity, creed, age, skill, intelligence, or any other such difference. All the obvious cases are in the “Club,” and squirrels are out.

“But, if this is true, then *unborn humans also share that something*, which means *they have the same equal right to life*. The best answers for why all *born* humans are equal must necessarily include *unborn humans*. **So, if we want to affirm equal rights for all people regardless of sex or creed or nationality or any other such thing, we must also protect the equal right to life of those humans who are not yet born.**”

Notice that I put abortion to the side for that entire reasoning process, and only brought it up in light of my conclusion at the very end. I sought to figure out what it is that gives obvious cases of persons an equal right to life *first*, and *then* looked at what the conclusion means in practice. The Equal Rights Argument is powerful because it takes something we should all agree on—equality for all born humans regardless of sex, ethnicity, age, ability, etc.—and examines WHY that equality should exist in the first place. *Only then* can we consider abortion.

The Equal Rights Institute summarized it thusly: *“If the thing we all possess that makes us equal is something the unborn doesn’t have, then abortion would be totally fine because the unborn isn’t a person. But that’s obviously not the case. The clearest answer that explains why all humans are people (and squirrels aren’t) is that something like our human nature gives us equal rights. The unborn have that human nature, so the only logical way to affirm equal rights is to protect the unborn, too.”*

6.

Bodily Autonomy and Responding to the ‘Right to Refuse’ Argument

The centrality of rights to the abortion debate – and in the public consciousness – is probably why the Bodily Autonomy argument is so persuasive. There are many versions of it, but the most persuasive is often called the “Right to Refuse Argument,” popularized by Judith Jarvis Thomson’s “In Defense of Abortion,” birthplace of the famous Violinist thought experiment, which goes something like this:

Imagine you wake up in a hospital bed, hooked up to machines with no memory of how you got there. In a bed next to you is an unconscious man hooked up to the same machines. The distraught doctor comes in and says, “I’m so sorry this has happened! You’ve been kidnapped by the Society of Music Lovers and hooked up to this man, who’s the world’s most famous violinist. He will die of a disease unless you remain hooked up to him for the next nine months. We’d love to disconnect you, but if we do, he’ll die. And, since he’s a person with the right to life, we can’t disconnect you.”

Thomson invites us to agree that the kidnapped person has the right to disconnect from the violinist; after all, no one has the right to force you to use your body to save his life.

A similar – and simpler – pro-choice thought experiment is to point out that it would be wrong even to force someone to donate blood, which is insignificant compared to nine months of pregnancy (or nine months hooked up to the violinist).

Both thought experiments assert that, just as you would have the right to unplug from the violinist or to refuse to donate blood, a woman should have right to “unplug” from the fetus during pregnancy, EVEN IF the fetus is a person.

Part of what’s compelling about these arguments is that part of the premise is true: we *don’t* have a right to force someone to use their body to help someone else by donating blood or staying hooked up to the hypothetical violinist. That would be a violation of rights.

We generally believe that individuals have bodily autonomy, ESPECIALLY when it comes to telling people to leave their body alone. This kind of bodily autonomy is one of the reasons why sexual assault, for example, is so clearly wrong. So we shouldn’t try to address the Violinist or the blood donation argument by denying the existence of bodily autonomy, because we don’t actually deny it.

Instead, we respond with something like this: state the areas where you agree about bodily rights, just as we’ve described above. Then, from that place of common ground, explain that you think Thomson and/or the blood donation argument miss a critical piece.

To explain, invite them to look back at the scenario they gave.

“Thomson doesn’t tell us, but there’s actually a third option for the person in the Violinist scenario – or in the scenario where you’re being asked to donate blood. If I’m in one of these scenarios my three options are: I can help the person, I can *not* help the person, or I could *kill* that person. If the Violinist or the person needing blood is dead, after all, he has no need for my body and I can leave the hospital.

“Obviously, option three is *wrong*. I can ethically refuse to donate blood or refuse to stay hooked up, but I don’t have the right to grab a knife and stab the other guy. Unfortunately for the Violinist and blood donation thought experiments, DIRECT KILLING, *NOT UNPLUGGING OR REFUSING TO HELP*, is the choice which most accurately matches up to abortion.

“Pregnancy is different from the Violinist or from blood donation because there is no ‘unplug’ or ‘don’t help’ option. The only two options are ‘help’ or ‘kill.’”

In my conversations, I always preface the next points with this warning, and this is your warning also:

“I don’t like talking about what happens in an abortion procedure, but in this case, the details matter. You deserve all the facts so you can make an informed decision.”

Then I will explain:

“In the earliest stages of pregnancy, the woman ingests a drug to separate the embryo from the placenta, which is how he gets his oxygen. After he suffocates, she takes a second pill to cause cramping in the uterus to expel the now dead baby.

“Once the embryo – now a fetus – is too big for the woman to have a chemical abortion, the abortion practitioner uses suction or forceps to literally dismember the fetus, after which he uses a vacuum to suck the pieces out.

“If the fetus is too big for a dismemberment abortion, he is first given a shot of digoxin to stop his heart – a lethal injection like we use on death row – and then labor is induced, and the woman gives birth to her dead baby.

“If someone killed a toddler by either suffocation, lethal injection, or dismemberment, no one would suggest it wasn’t violence. These are lethal actions against a helpless, innocent person. Abortion is not merely unplugging like women are *falsely* told. It is *killing*. And the Right to Refuse Argument assumes for sake of argument that the fetus is a person.

“Bodily autonomy could only justify abortion if one argued that it gave the right to kill innocent people. That’s precisely what the pro-life position denies; it’s why we oppose abortion. We do not believe you have the right to kill innocent people, save only in very specific cases like medical triage, which we’ll discuss momentarily. IF the fetus is a person, then elective abortion unnecessarily kills an innocent person. THAT’S the limitation we place on bodily autonomy.”

7.

What if the Mother's Life is at Risk?

I've heard it put forth by other pro-life groups that clarifying the pro-life position on "life of the mother" cases should be an automatic part of all pro-life elevator pitches, viewpoint summaries, and abortion dialogues for the foreseeable future.

I'm inclined to agree. Let's get into why.

A reasonable point that pro-choice people often bring up is, "What if the mother's life is in danger?" After all, if the pregnancy threatens her life, shouldn't she be able to seek life-saving medical treatment, even if the fetus dies?

What surprises many people – including some pro-lifers who don't know that such cases exist – is that **the pro-life answer is, "Yes, a woman should seek *necessary* life-saving medical treatment, even if the fetus cannot be saved, if there is truly no alternative."** This may be a shocking answer, so let me explain.

Let's say a woman has an ectopic pregnancy, where the fetus implants in the wrong part of the woman's body (often the fallopian tube). The fetus cannot survive in that environment and, tragically, will die. Our medicine currently cannot change that. Unfortunately, the ectopic pregnancy can endanger the woman's life too. Medical intervention to save her life cannot save the fetus, but it can save her. *Pro-lifers are totally in favor of such life-saving treatment when there are no legitimate alternatives.* There is disagreement in the pro-life movement over which specific procedures we can use, but basically all pro-lifers agree that treatment is morally justified *in scenarios where it is impossible to save both*, even though the child will tragically die as an unintended and undesired consequence. Our intent is to *save* the life we can save.

To clarify, **this is not devaluing the baby's life; it's legitimate medical triage.** If a building is burning down, two people are trapped, and I can only save one, the fact that I choose to save one and not the other doesn't mean that one life is more valuable; it means I have a tough call to make to save the one I think I have the best chance of saving.

Part of the confusion that surrounds this is that pro-life people generally don't define such medical interventions as 'abortions'. Most pro-choice people *do*. So, when a pro-lifer says, "There's never a medical justification for an abortion, so I'm 100% against abortion," that's true... if you're not defining medical intervention of this type as an abortion.

On one hand, I personally am inclined to think we *shouldn't* define it as an abortion. On the other hand, when we make these "100% pro-life statements" without clarifying, it's confusing to both pro-life *and* pro-choice people.

Clarifying this is one of the most important things you can do when conversing about abortion.

It's also vital to point out that literally *all* of the pro-life laws that have been passed recently make *explicit* provisions for these life of the mother cases. **Nowhere in the US will *any* woman be denied treatment for a life-threatening pregnancy or miscarriage, and the pro-life laws are *all* clear about this.** (People needn't just take our word for it; check the source in the citations, which has links to all the laws in question). When the media reports otherwise, they are either failing to do research or deliberately lying. Either one puts women at unnecessary risk, and it needs to stop.

8.

The Back-Alley Abortion Argument

It's fairly common to hear the argument that making abortion illegal will only lead to thousands upon thousands of women dying in back-alley abortions, and with the Dobbs case this argument will only become more common.

Pro-choice people are often legitimately concerned about the health effects of making abortion illegal. They believe that women will still seek abortions – and, yes, some will – and that they'll seek abortions in the same numbers as before, but that those abortions will now be conducted in dangerous environments, often called “back-alley abortions.”

First and foremost, **I want to make it very clear that I do not want women dying in abortions, whether legal or illegal.** I've actually seen some of the graphic images of women who died in botched abortions, and I don't want that happening to anyone.

However, there are some key facts that many people – pro-life or pro-choice – don't know about illegal abortions. The first thing is how they would be performed now, versus pre-Roe days. **Chemical abortions – the abortion pill – are one new thing that's come since Roe, and are probably how most illegal abortions will be done.** Planned Parenthood openly says this is their plan. The problem is, these pills can *certainly* be unsafe, as they can cause severe and even life-threatening bleeding. A woman *might* take the first dose of the abortion pill at the abortion center, but she takes the second dose at home without supervision or assistance. Since the second dose is taken without medical supervision, it is likewise without input from a medical professional on how much bleeding is too much. But, to be clear, **that's a danger right now while it's still legal. We know that some women have died from excessive bleeding after taking these legal pills,** and most of the time it happened at home. The other dangers of the chemical abortion are – likewise – integral to the drug, and unrelated to whether it's legal. These days, some women are even taking the *first* dose at home – again, LEGALLY – because the drugs are *mailed* to them. Whether it's legal or illegal, the health risks to the woman are the same.

It was ironically similar in the pre-Roe era. **The vast majority of illegal abortions happening before Roe aren't really much different from the legal surgical abortions happening after Roe.** Pre-Roe surgical abortions were almost exclusively being done in hospitals and medical clinics. Yes, it was off the record and illegal, but it was still happening in a surgical setting, performed by doctors and nurses using basically the same methods that are used now with only minor tweaks. **Planned Parenthood's own 1955 study said that 90% of illegal abortions were performed by doctors and nurses.** Numerous abortion advocates and abortionists like Dr. Ruth Barnett and Dr. Malcom Potts likewise affirm this. Potts and others openly disputed the false claims of ‘thousands of deaths’ from illegal abortions, even trying to correct what the media was reporting. But they were ignored.

Women still die from these procedures now that they're legal, and the main thing that saves their lives from botched abortions *isn't* that abortion is legal – it's that medicine has advanced with accessible antibiotics and life-saving treatments that can deal with sepsis, perforated uteruses, compromised cervixes, and the other common causes of death from botched surgical abortions.

Abortion is already dangerous for the woman; legality won't change the method or risks in the vast majority of cases.

Another key point that's often overlooked is that **it's not realistic to think that abortions will be happening at the same rate after abortion is made illegal.** When abortion was first made legal throughout the US in 1973, abortion numbers doubled almost immediately and skyrocketed from there. Yet, when states – and other countries – have passed laws even just *restricting* abortion, the numbers have dropped significantly. I won't go into all the data here – as with everything else, check the resources in the back – but **we have very strong reasons to believe that, realistically, the vast majority of women will no longer seek an abortion if it's illegal.**

That said, there will still be some women who are desperate enough to seek an unsafe, illegal abortion, and those women certainly deserve to be discussed. To do that, I'm going to quote at length from Equal Rights Institute:

"I don't want anyone to get hurt in an abortion – whether legal or illegal – but I also don't think that we can hold the law hostage because of citizens threatening to hurt themselves. Please let me explain with a story that, while admittedly kind of weird, gets to the heart of my concerns pretty well:

"Imagine we live in an alternate reality where abortion as we know it is physically impossible. In that alternate reality, the uterus is so protective of the fetus that you simply cannot kill the fetus by the medical or surgical means that we use today. The only way to kill the fetus would be to do something drastic that would injure the woman as well—like stabbing her abdomen with a big knife. In this world, infanticide is also illegal, just like it is in the United States today, but there is a group of pregnant women who are campaigning to make infanticide legal.

"These women in this hypothetical scenario are so desperate to not have a child that they are threatening to stab themselves in the abdomen if the government won't let them kill their infants after birth, thus putting pressure on the government to make infanticide legal in order to prevent these women hurting themselves in the pursuit of an inherently dangerous abortion.

"To be clear, I'm NOT saying that this is what women are like or that there are women out there who would actually do this if we lived in this tragic alternate world. And I absolutely do NOT want any women to hurt themselves. But, I also don't think that the government can hold the law hostage because its citizens are threatening to hurt themselves. That alternative universe shouldn't make infanticide legal; killing a helpless newborn is still clearly wrong.

It's wrong to subject innocent people to violence and murder, and you don't get much more innocent than a helpless newborn. Regardless of our other politics, I think we can agree that protecting innocent people from violence and murder is the kind of thing the government should have laws on.

“So, if the prohibition of infanticide shouldn't be held hostage by people threatening to hurt themselves, then – if the fetus is a person with rights like you and I – outlawing abortion shouldn't be held hostage either. [Emphasis added]

“I think the real question is whether pro-lifers are right that killing a human fetus has the same moral weight as killing a newborn human infant.”

If you haven't brought up the Equal Rights Argument already, this is a good point to transition to it.

Again, *pro-lifers do not want anyone to get hurt in an abortion, legal or illegal.* But the potential of back-alley abortions is *not* enough to justify keeping it legal to deliberately kill innocent human beings.

On a related note, it can be worth noting that, these days, the groups that are doing the most to protect women from malpractice by abortionists are actually pro-life organizations like *Reprotection*.

Reprotection and similar groups investigate cases of malpractice and unsafe conditions at abortion centers. These cases are often raised by traumatized clients who were physically hurt by botched abortions or unsanitary and unsafe conditions in legal abortion clinics – clinics which are often dangerously unregulated. *Reprotection* has also helped uncover situations where victims of sexual abuse were being brought in for abortions by their abusers, and the abortion centers failed to report abortions on minors to Child Protective Services as the centers are required to do by law.

Pro-lifers do such investigations because we don't want *anyone* dying in an abortion – the mother *or* the child – and we don't want women being abused or having their abuse covered up by the actions of an abortion facility. We value *both* the life of the mother *and* her child. That's why groups like *Reprotection* exist, and it's *also* why there are thousands and thousands of free pregnancy resource centers which offer medical, practical, and emotional assistance for mothers *during* and *after* pregnancy, and also offer non-judgmental help to them if they've had the abortion. In fact, sometimes the whistle gets blown on unsafe conditions in abortion centers precisely because a woman who'd had an abortion went to her local Pregnancy Center seeking help dealing with the emotional and sometimes physical trauma and, through the help of this pro- life center, she found the courage to report on the unsafe conditions at the abortion center.

Even if abortion becomes illegal throughout the country, illegal abortions will – tragically – still happen. They almost certainly won't be happening at the same rate as legal abortions, but they will still happen. No matter how many happen, though, these free life-affirming pregnancy centers won't go away. They will already be there helping women during and after the pregnancy or abortion, no matter what.

9.

Conclusion

This short overview cannot cover all the things which may come up in a dialogue about abortion. You will be provided with many links for additional reading, viewing, listening, and research so that you may learn more on your own time at your own pace, or at least know where to look if something unexpected comes up.

I encourage you to check out our list of resources, particularly if you are going to be engaged in **sidewalk advocacy**, as there is a different set of arguments that are most useful in those situations, though the principles of respect and getting to know the other person still obviously apply.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed when talking about abortion, but the truth is that you don't have to be. I've had conversations about abortion where I know I made mistakes, where I phrased something badly or lost my train of thought or didn't have a good response, but where it was still a productive conversation in the end because the other person knew I respected them, knew that I spoke from the heart, and knew that I was trying to do the right thing. Because of that, we were able to have some patience with each other and make some progress.

As just one example, **it's HUGE if you can simply clarify that we don't oppose medical intervention to save the mother's life, and that our pro-life laws explicitly allow this.** I cannot tell you how **many people are opposing pro-life laws and the pro-life movement solely because they think we're against medical intervention**, and many who are pro-choice for other reasons don't even want to *hear* from us because they think that we're blind to medical necessity. **Just teaching people the truth in this one regard makes a massive difference!**

Another simple but critical thing you can do is to make it known that there are recovery programs and counselors for people who have lost children through abortion. **We want to help women – and men – find healing from the trauma of their past abortions. As with all of this, we are here to help, not to judge.** Specific resources are in the list at the end.

Simply helping the other person see a different side of the argument, a side which is more compassionate and more sensible than they perhaps once thought, is a huge win. If you can share this with them, it's that much easier to talk about the deeper moral questions and to give the person something to reflect on. You may not see them change their mind right then. In fact, you almost certainly won't; few people change a deeply held belief in the course of one conversation.

But, if you can show them respect, give them something to think about, and point them towards the truth, you can start them on the journey towards recognizing the dignity and worth of *all* human persons, born or unborn. That, my friends, is something I know you can do, and it is a beautiful thing indeed.

Resources: Websites, Videos, and Further Reading

Our Website: www.humanlifewa.org/ **Contact Us:** info@humanlifewa.org

Email Signup: info@humanlifewa.org

Download and Share This Training Booklet: <https://humanlifewa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Champions-for-Life-Basic-Training-Handbook.pdf>

Dialogue Tips – What to Do and What *Not* to Do

- Improving Clarity - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/two-simple-tips-to-help-you-master-the-art-of-clarity/
- Conversational Lessons - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/four-lessons-from-my-first-conversation-about-abortion/
- Avoiding Unnecessary Philosophy Tangents - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/circumventing-philosophy-hell/
- Respectful Disagreement - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/lets-talk-about-disagreeing-with-each-other/
- Avoiding “Fetus Tunnel Vision” - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/fetus-tunnel-vision-4-reasons-pro-lifers-need-to-stop-doing-this/
- Sometimes It’s Not About the Argument - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/sometimes-its-not-about-the-argument/
- Tips for Changing Minds - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/4-tips-for-changing-more-minds/

General Resources

- National Right to Life, our parent organization - <https://www.nrlc.org/>
- ERI Quick Response - <https://blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/new-pro-life-resource-eri-quick-response-series/>
- ERI Shorts - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrPyygzz43E&list=PLsN8Ay8poS-It-dWSmblq1ZufOH-MVj1L>
- ERI Bodily Rights Materials - <https://blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/bodily-rights/>
- Responding to “Personally Pro-Life” - prolifereplies.liveaction.org/personally-pro-life/
- *Responding to Pro-Choice Memes* - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/refuting-pro-choice-memes/
- Secular Pro-Lifers – Understanding how secular pro-lifers come to their stance may help you reach atheists, agnostics, and more, even if you are religious.
 - <https://secularprolife.org/>
 - <https://secularprolife.org/2014/06/the-imago-dei-or-why-should-secularists/>
- **Pastor Involvement** - [blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/every-pastor-prevent-abortions-congregation](http://blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/every-pastor-prevent-abortions-congregation;); www.youtube.com/watch?v=szw8ASoUZGw
- **Dobbs Messaging Overview** with Susan B Anthony List (works best when contextualized by the dialogue [approach we’ve discussed above](#)) s27319.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Dobbs-Messaging-Guide.pdf

Back Alley Abortions

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lt3N2-q-83g>
 - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/quick-response-10-back-alley-abortions/
 - <https://www.hli.org/resources/doesnt-legal-abortion-save-women-filthy-back-alley-abortion-mills/> *
- *We have methodological differences with HL International, but data in this article is solid
- CDC, Abortion 1972:
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00041486.htm#00001660.htm>

Abortion Recovery Programs and How Abortion Affects Women and Men (Applicable to *Back-Alley Abortion*)

- *Support After Abortion* - <https://supportafterabortion.com/>
- *SaveOne* - Helping men, women, and families recover after an abortion - <https://saveone.org/>
- *Rachel's Vineyard* – Healing the pain of abortion one weekend at a time - <https://www.rachelsvineyard.org/>
- *Live Action News* - prolifereplies.liveaction.org/back-alley/
- *Silent No More* – Educating people about the effects of abortion and helping those harmed by abortion to find healing - www.silentnomoreawareness.org/
- *Sexually-Related Trauma Services* – (SRT Services) - <https://srtservices.org/>
 - Sexual Abuse/Assault Recovery Programs
 - Miscarriage/Stillbirth Recovery Programs
 - Past Abortion Recovery Services
 - Unwanted Pregnancy Services
 - STD Services

The Risks of Chemical Abortion

- www.liveaction.org/news/abortion-pill-dangers-women/;
www.youtube.com/watch?v=8i2GVGjH0tc&t;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eavTT_Ee2Dg;
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBf05Cuy5t8
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyQ_cdjNEVY&list=PL8M0D0DJ5iPrjgACqteXqow3GTTwKZU4W
- Susan B. Anthony List; Contact Sue Liebel, State Director at 317-440-6998
abortiondrugfacts.com/facts-you-need-to-know-before-taking-the-abortion-pill
- **Abortion Pill Reversal:** <https://abortionpillreversal.com/>

Dangerous Conditions in Abortion Centers

- **Reprotection** – an organization which exposes the unsafe conditions in abortion facilities and holds them accountable to the law and to ethics - www.reprotection.org/
- Testimony of **former abortionist** - www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/01/22/abortion-doctor-complications-pro-life-roe-wade-column/4530180002/
- Examples of injuries and deaths from 'safe', legal abortions:
 - www.liveaction.org/news/manhattan-planned-parenthood-injures-33rd-woman/#at_pco=smlwn-1.0&at_si=624202dc4de036b5&at_ab=per-2&at_pos=0&at_tot=1
 - www.liveaction.org/news/abortionist-maimed-killed-roe-die/

- www.liveaction.org/news/lawsuit-planned-parenthood-perforated-uterus-bowel/#at_pco=smlwn-1.0&at_si=624202e1243fd0e5&at_ab=per-2&at_pos=0&at_tot=1

The Science: Biology, Embryology, and Fetal Development

- ERI Video – Is the Fetus Human? www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrPygz43E
- Reply to “The Fetus is a Parasite” - blog.equalrightsintstitute.com/quick-response-3-the-fetus-is-a-parasite/
- Reply to “Embryo isn’t Human” - blog.equalrightsintstitute.com/quick-response-1-the-embryo-isnt-human/
- ERI Video – Is the Fetus a Parasite? www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0xKRSMpoao
- Reply to “No One Knows When Life Begins - prolifereplies.liveaction.org/no-one-knows-when-life-begins/

Equal Rights and Personhood

- ERI Video – Is the Fetus a Person? www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6_kwErY4OE
- Is the fetus a person? - prolifereplies.liveaction.org/a-fetus-is-not-a-person/
- The Equal Rights Argument - www.youtube.com/watch?v=louYc-9cvE0&t

Trot-Out-The-Toddler

- How to use this method: www.jfaweb.org/jfa-blog/2017/10/30/featured-resource-tott
- How NOT to use it: www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCBQEDSym70

Abortion in the Case of Rape or Incest – Responding with Love

- blog.equalrightsintstitute.com/responding-question-rape-wisdom-compassion/
- blog.equalrightsintstitute.com/refuting-pro-choice-memes/#7
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFGaLSplZ3o
- prolifereplies.liveaction.org/abortion-in-cases-of-rape/
- blog.equalrightsintstitute.com/quick-response-12-we-need-broad-abortion-access-for-rape-cases/

Fetal Abnormality and Disabilities

- Disabilities - prolifereplies.liveaction.org/disabilities/
- Terminal Diagnosis - prolifereplies.liveaction.org/terminal-diagnosis/
- Be Not Afraid (Care and Support for Families) - benotafraid.net/
- Especially Pro-Life (Care and Support for Families) - www.especiallyprolife.com/

When the Life of the Mother is At Risk

- ERI overview - blog.equalrightsintstitute.com/mothers-life-risk-speech-audio/
- **Pro-life laws PROTECT the mother’s life; Abortion Bans DO lower abortions.** This resource also covers Foster Care, Miscarriage Treatment, other common concerns - <https://secularprolife.org/2022/06/responding-to-16-pro-choice-claims-about-dobbs-the-pro-life-movement-and-abortion-bans/>

- Is it medically necessary? (note: clarify that pro-life and pro-choice often don't agree on terms; we don't consider necessary medical intervention an abortion; clarify your terms and highlight your agreement, and say, "this is what pro-lifers mean by 'never medically necessary.' We want medical intervention to save the mother's life, even if the child cannot be saved) prolifereplies.liveaction.org/medically-necessary/
- Defining Your Terms - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8TVroArQLw>
- Abortion is not self-defense www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3SJ-jpl6mA&list=PLsN8Ay8poS-IWLz7oGtS-oXhn2QYPimEt&index=6

Bodily Autonomy Pt. 1: The Sovereign Zone/ "My Body, My Choice"

- ERI Video – Responding to "My Body, My Choice" - www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHujgQhRxo0
- LiveAction – Responding to "My Body, My Choice" - prolifereplies.liveaction.org/my-body-my-choice/
- ERI Blog – Bodily Rights Arguments Necessitate Extremism - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/bodily-rights-arguments-necessitate-extremism/
- "Autumn in the Sovereign Zone" - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/autumn-in-the-sovereign-zone-why-its-my-body-i-can-do-what-i-want-wont-do/

Bodily Autonomy Pt. 2: The Right to Refuse Argument

- Responding to Thomson's Violinist - www.jfaweb.org/jfa-blog/2015/10/13/a-response-to-the-strongest-violinist
- Quick Response to the Violinist - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/quick-response-5-women-have-the-right-to-refuse-the-use-of-their-bodies-the-violinist-argument/
- Refuting "Abortion as Self-Defense" - blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/refuting-abortion-as-self-defense/
- The 'Blood Donation' analogy - www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmBrUcpOxDw

Apologetics Resources:

Equal Rights Institute (ERI) – Training Pro-Life Advocates to Think Clearly, Reason Honestly, and Argue Persuasively - equalrightsinstitute.com/. We highly recommend both ERI's **Sidewalk**

Advocacy and **Equipped for Life** Courses.

- ERI Courses equalrightsinstitute.com/courses/; ERI Podcasts equalrightsinstitute.com/podcasts/
- ERI Blog blog.equalrightsinstitute.com/
- ERI Youtube www.youtube.com/channel/UCktsGmXKWQT3CeVHMbV-GAQ

Justice For All (JFA) – Learn the art of changing minds on abortion! www.jfaweb.org/

- JFA Blog www.jfaweb.org/jfa-blog
- JFA Free Education, Resources, and other Content www.jfaweb.org/jfa-member-content-more-info
- JFA Stories www.jfaweb.org/stories

Healing the Culture – Make abortion unthinkable by teaching students of all ages about happiness, love, justice, and human dignity in a classroom setting. www.healingtheculture.com/