

Confronting the Myths About Abortion

Rich Nathan
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Sanctity of Life Weekend
2 Corinthians 10:3-5

This evening [morning] we are going to be commemorating Sanctity of Life Sunday, which is a time set aside by churches around America each year to remember the 40+ million babies that have been aborted since the US Supreme Court decision, Roe verse Wade. That was the decision of the court in 1973 to strike down the laws in all 50 states which had previously declared abortion illegal. The number of abortions performed in the US in the last 30 years is absolutely staggering. More than 40 million...we are talking about a greater number of abortions than lives in our most populated state, California. We are talking about a number which would embrace the populations of 22 of our states. Joseph Stalin once said, "Kill one person and everyone notices. Kill a million and it is just a statistic."

The scripture passage that I would like us to consider today is found in 2 Corinthians 10 where the apostle Paul says this, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Though we live in the world, we don't wage war as the world does. Those of us who are Christians and are committed to the pro-life cause do not wage war as the world does, using weapons of violence, or clinic bombings, or distortion of the facts, or lies, or personal attacks. Instead, the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world, but they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

Now, what are strongholds? Strongholds are fortress walls that keep people walled away from the presence and the blessing of God. Now, what's the substance of these "walls?" What are strongholds made of? Paul goes on and says, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God." Strongholds are made of ideas, arguments, myths, that dominate the minds of believers and unbelievers that keep them from walking in obedience to God or experience his blessing.

What is it that keeps you from walking in full obedience to God? One of the main things that keeps you from full obedience are arguments or lies that fill your mind and convince you that violating God's commandments in a certain area makes sense. You see, no one disobeys a commandment of God without first believing

a lie, without having your mind intruded by some argument, some persuasion telling you it is better, in this case, to disobey than to obey.

Like what? Well, if we are talking about the whole of life, not just abortion, sometimes we believe the arguments that I can stop whenever I want to. Have you ever heard that argument? Have you ever said it? I can stop whenever I want to. I mean, this argument has been inserted in the minds of millions of people and has led countless down the road to addictions. Well, I am just going to try smoking, but I know I am one that is not going to get hooked. A little exposure to pornography doesn't mean that I am going to get hooked. I can date outside the faith and not be harmed long term. I can stop whenever I want to, that argument has kept millions of people in bondage to an addiction.

The truth is that there are many things in life that are more powerful than your will. Your will is not very strong. And there is a good reason not to get started with certain kinds of behaviors like drugs, cigarettes, or eating disorders, or sexual misconduct, or pornography. The reason you shouldn't get started is, as has been experienced by folks all over America, you can't stop once you start. And if you have started and can't stop, you need help. As so many have discovered in going through some kind of 12-Step Recovery Program or AA, the argument that I can stop any time I want didn't work in their lives. There was a stronghold keeping them from experiencing the presence of God and the freedom that Christ really has for us.

Or an argument that says, "Well, everyone has a right to happiness," and then we use that to justify some shameful behavior that can't be justified any other way – I have a right to happiness. The truth is, you have no right to happiness at the expense of your marriage vows. You have no right to happiness at the expense of your children. You don't have a right to happiness at the expense of violating God's commands or doing what he tells you not to do or spitting in God's face, or violating your conscience. A right to happiness has been used by so many people to do something that is shameful or immoral or that they would never be able to argue otherwise. But it is a stronghold. This argument keeps people from really experiencing the freedom of having a clean conscience, an experience of God's very best for them.

Let me give one last example to illustrate what I mean by strongholds. "Everybody is doing it." Have you ever heard that one playing in your mind? Well, I am not going to argue that cheating on your taxes is exactly right, but everybody does it. Everybody pads their expense account a little bit. Everybody cheats on their marriage vows. Everybody has sex before marriage. Come on... That is the argument played out over and over again in almost all American movies. Come on...everyone is doing it...get with it...join us in the garbage dump.

The truth is not everyone cheats on their marriage vows. Most people don't. And not everyone has sex before marriage. There are still many, many people that are virgins when they take their vows. And not everyone uses drugs. And not everyone cheats on their taxes. And if you have done those things, you don't have to continue to do them.

A stronghold is a building made up of arguments and these arguments keep people from obeying God and from experiencing God's blessing and God's presence.

Now, since the abortion fight, by and large, has become not a legal and legislative fight, but primarily a private one-to-one, personal conversion of individual after individual. It is not primarily a legislative battle but a moral and spiritual battle. One of the main ways that people in America are going to be changed is by demolishing arguments. By persuading, by convincing. By coming to a place of conviction ourselves.

Today we are going to try to demolish some arguments in a talk that I have called "Confronting the Myths About Abortion." Let's pray.

The first argument that I would like to raise – the first stronghold that I want to tear down is:

The position that pro-life arguments are just the attempts of men to keep women barefoot and pregnant.

You know, if you are pro-life, you are somehow anti-woman or anti-women's rights and you are a Neanderthal that simply wants to just put women in their place and take away reproductive freedom. It is just an attempt by men to keep women barefoot and pregnant.

Well, you know the fact is that the vast majority of pro-life activists are women and not men. If you go to any pro-life rally or you attend any pro-life meeting or prayer group, or if you go down to an abortion clinic and see who it is that is mostly involved in sidewalk counseling, or if you go to anyone of the pregnancy health centers around the country, you are going to find that the vast, vast majority of pro-life activists are women and not men. There are men involved, but most of the activity is done by women. And the number of women who have had abortions and who have become pro-life activists far, far exceeds the number of women who have had abortions and have become pro-abortion activists.

Now, this is a telling statistic. Of those women who have had abortions, about 39,000 have joined the National Abortion Rights Action League that is commonly known as NARAL. But nearly 250,000, more than six times the number of women who have had abortions, have joined the National Right to Life.

It is a curious thing that abortion and women's rights have been so closely linked in the public's mind by the media and by the abortion rights leaders. Because in point of fact, almost all of the original proponents for loosening abortion legislation and legalizing abortion, almost all the original proponents – not all, but almost all of the original proponents for abortion were men, not women. It was male doctors and male judges and male attorneys and male theologians and male pastors and male legislators and male owners of health clinics that were the staunchest early proponents of free universal abortion. Why do so many men support abortion? Could it be that abortion uniquely serves men's interests in having free sex without any consequences?

I mean, think with me, friends, which gender historically has been known to desire free sex without the burden of long term relationship, without the necessary burden of economics, cost, affection? Who wants sex without consequences more – historically? Abortion on demand is totally consistent with a view of sex without consequences that many men want.

FACT: The availability of abortions has been exploited by many, many, many men to pressure their girlfriends, their wives, their lovers into having an abortion against a woman's choice. Some of you women in this congregation who have had abortions were pressured to have them by men. It wasn't this unfettered free choice by the autonomous woman that you experienced at the time of your abortion. For many of you, it was a pressured decision by a man. And some of you men have been involved in pressuring your girlfriends, lovers or even your wives to have abortions because it served your interest of having sex without the consequence of caring for or raising a child.

Not only is it in men's interest, mostly, to have sex without consequences, but men feel as a biological matter less attachment to an unborn child than a woman does. I believe that the idea that many men are strong proponents of abortion is not some lofty women's rights perspective, but rather men don't feel any particular attachment or maternal instinct toward an unborn child. It is women that suffer the consequence of abortion most acutely – not men. I am not saying that no man suffers when his child is aborted. I am saying that in terms of statistics and impact and the severity of impact, women suffer the most. It is, after all, her body that is invaded by this procedure called abortion.

If abortion is so great for women, why are tens of thousands of women around the country involved in post-abortion recovery groups? A major random study found that a minimum of 19% of post-abortion women suffer from diagnosable post-traumatic stress disorder. Like the kind of thing that soldiers get after being involved in wars and battles. 19% of women after abortion, according to a major study, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. About half of women who have had abortions had many, but not all, of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a psychological dysfunction. Let me read to you from a manual on psychiatric disorders. "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder is a psychological dysfunction which results from a traumatic experience that overwhelms a person's normal mechanisms resulting in intense fear, feelings of helplessness or being trapped, or a sense of a loss of control."

And so the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder can involve anxiety attacks, outbursts of rage, aggressive behavior, difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, recurrent intrusive thoughts about the aborted child, flashbacks, nightmares, reactions of intense grief on the anniversary date of the child's abortion or on the due date of the child. Incidences of cervical cancer and breast cancer have been proven to be much higher for post-abortion women than for women who have not had abortions. Abortion is not something that is good for a woman. In fact, it is the most reasonable position if you are truly pro-woman, pro-woman's interests, pro-equality, pro-women's rights to be pro-life. Interestingly, the vast majority of early women feminists were totally opposed to abortion. They saw, as I am arguing today, that an abortion deeply wounds a woman, causing her to kill her unborn child. And abortions often serve the interests of men.

Here's another argument.

If abortion were illegal, women would return to the back alleys where tens of thousands died of complications.

Now, this claim of tens of thousands that died of illegal abortions before the Supreme Court legalized abortion in Roe verse Wade, is patently false. And the abortion rights activists who make this claim over and over again about the unsafeness of back alley abortions, know that the claim is false. In 1972, the year prior to legalized abortion in the US, the Center for Disease Control, a government agency that had a pro-abortion philosophy, recorded 39 deaths nationally – 39 nationally – from illegal abortions. In fact, a statistician for Planned Parenthood, a man by the name of Dr. Christopher Teitze, said that the claim of five or ten or tens of thousands of deaths per year prior to legalized abortion is unmitigated nonsense.

Dr. Bernard Nathason, who was the founder of the National Abortion Rights Action League, stated, "Our favorite tactic was to blame the church for every death of women by botched abortions. We often exaggerated the statistics to make our case stronger."

It wasn't the legalization of abortion that made abortions safer. It was the discovery of penicillin and antibiotics in the 1940's that kept women from the infections that previously led to women's deaths. Deaths from abortions radically

fell at the beginning of the 1950's and continued to be at a very low level because of antibiotics, not legalization.

If abortion were illegal, many women would still get them as they did before legalization. What is the point of a law if lots of people violate the law?

Well, the truth is that we have thousands of laws, almost none of which are obeyed by 100% of the population. I mean to say that because some women will continue to seek abortions, even if they are illegal, is the same as saying that because people will drive drunk or murder or steal as they do, that we shouldn't have any laws to prohibit drunk driving or murder or theft or rape. And that it should be legal for people to do what they otherwise would do.

The law does have a persuasive effect. The fact is that once abortion was legalized, millions of women obtained abortions that never would have chosen that route in the past. The law has an educational function. It guides behavior. Just because people violate the law doesn't mean that we shouldn't have a law.

Well, why should we have a law prohibiting abortion? After all, we just don't know when life begins.

We just don't know when life begins. If you were discussing with another person the issue of abortion and they made some kind of statement that no one knows when life begins or this whole area is fraught with uncertainty and medical controversy – it might be wise to ask such a person, "Well, then, upon whom should the burden of proof be concerning the presence of human life?"

Let me illustrate what I am getting at. Let's say you were a hunter and you were in the woods with a shotgun and you heard some rustling in the brush. Now, you thought that the rustling was the presence of a deer, but you weren't sure. Because the brush is so thick you can't see what is rustling in the brush. In fact, you were told that there were other hunters in the area. Now, what would a reasonable person do if you aren't sure if human life is present in the brush – fire away and kill whatever is there because I'm not certain if it's a person? Or say, "Well, I ought to take the presumption, not being sure, that whatever is rustling there is a person until I am sure that it is not." For those who argue that no one can be sure that a fetus in the womb is, in fact, a human being, I would say, "If there is any doubt at all in your mind, then you ought to award the benefit of the doubt to the fetus and not kill what very well may be a human being."

Frankly, the issue of what is being carried in the womb of a pregnant woman is really not an issue of biological debate anymore. The fact is that when a father's sperm that contains 23 chromosomes fuses with an egg of 23 chromosomes in the mother's womb to form a zygote of 46 chromosomes, we are beginning the process of development and maturation of a new human being. Prior to the event of fertilization, this combination of chromosomes never existed in history.

And after the death of this individual, a hundred years later that combination of chromosomes will never exist again.

Something new, something different, something special, something that never existed, someone who never existed, begins to exist at the moment of conception. And at the moment of conception everything that will determine the genetic inheritance of a new human being is in place – the color of the person's hair, the color of their eyes and skin, their facial features, their body type, qualities of personality, their intelligence – these are all determined at the moment of conception. Every individual receives their entirely original combination, which hasn't occurred in human history and never will again, at the moment of conception. Identical twins are the only exception to the rule of one person, one genetic makeup.

By the time a baby is 18-25 days old, often long before a mother is sure or even sometimes aware that she might be pregnant, the baby's heart is already beating the first stroke of the three billion heartbeats that will take place in an average person's life time. Before a woman is even aware that she is pregnant, there is another beating heart inside of her. Every abortion stops a beating heart.

At 40 days, we can now record electrical waves from the baby's brain. The skeleton begins to develop. By 8 weeks, a baby feels pain. They will grasp things and swims with a natural swimmer's stroke. At 8 weeks, baby's have unique fingerprints that will never change except for size. At 8 weeks, if you look at a baby's face, their face looks like a little baby. They have limbs and their genitals are beginning to appear.

By the 9th and 10th week, a baby begins to suck his or her thumb in the womb. They are turning somersaults and jump. They squint. They move their tongue. 95% of the known structures are in place.

By the 12th and 13th week the baby recoils from pain and is developing fingernails. By the 5th month the mother feels the baby's movements. The growing baby inside a mother's womb can sleep, wake, and hiccup. Their skin, nails and hair are growing. Fine hair begins to grow on a baby's head. They are getting eyebrows and eyelashes.

By the 6th month the baby responds to light and sound and can hear and recognize his or her mother's voice. By the 7th month the baby's brain and neural-circuits are just as advanced as a newborn baby's.

Friend, it is untrue that we don't know when life begins or what is going on in the womb. We do. We are not just talking about a piece of tissue or a part of a mother's body, as is often asserted. It may be politically expedient to pretend that we just don't know what we're dealing with. We are talking about a separate human being.

A woman ought to have the right to choose what she does with her own body.

As I have been trying to argue, a fetus is not part of a woman's own body. A fetus is a separate individual that is growing inside of a woman's body, but has different genetic material. Genetically, a mother and a baby are separate individuals from the moment of conception. Anyone who has ever had a baby knows that you can look at your child and say, "Where did this baby come from? They are so different than I am." Yes, they have some similarities – they walk like Dad; their smile and look is like Uncle Bill's. We are not talking about a piece of tissue or a fingernail. We are talking about a separate individual.

And you know, the facts of fetal development are often kept hidden from women who are seeking abortions. The staffs at abortion clinics are told to turn the ultrasound monitor away from a woman who is considering having an abortion so they cannot see that little baby growing in their womb. The truth is pregnant women who are seeking abortions are kept from the facts. If women knew what was really going on in terms of fetal development, that that little baby growing inside of you is now sucking its thumb and doing little somersaults and has a face that looks like a little baby's and has tiny little arms and legs and fingerprints – if they could see that little life, many would choose not to have an abortion.

But the facts are hidden. I believe that's why many people are so upset about the display of pictures or videos that show abortions. Lots of people don't want to see. They don't want to see. They don't want to know the facts that this is not just a part of a woman's body, but this is a separate individual who feels pain.

You know, seeing, educating yourself, is often a powerful stimulation to action. It was seeing pictures of Southern Sheriffs on television using fire hoses against defenseless African American men, women and children; it was seeing scenes of police dogs being set upon a crowd of young African Americans that caused white America to say, "Enough." It is seeing inside the concentration camps and the effects of the Holocaust that led to the Nazi War Crimes Trials at Nuremberg.

Yes, a woman has a right to control her own body, as does a man, and as should a baby. But our right to control our body ends when we effect other people's bodies. So when someone says, "Well, this is just a right for a woman to choose what she does with her own body" or some spin of that argument, that a right to an abortion is a private decision between a woman and her doctor, you tell them there is another person involved here.

And do you know that according to one study of abortion clinics, 90% of women didn't even meet their doctor until it was time for the abortion to be performed? The notion of these caring physicians who are giving women all of the facts, showing them what is going on inside of the womb, explaining to them the

possibility of long term health risks resulting from abortion or the possibility of post-abortion traumatic stress disorder, the notion that all these things are being discussed and weighed out by a physician talking with his or her patient, is so fallacious that it almost makes me sick. Women are customers of clinics who do everything possible to hide the true facts from women.

Well, Rich, pro-lifers shouldn't impose their values on others.

Have you ever heard that? It is fine for you to hold whatever position you hold, but you shouldn't and you have no right to impose your pro-life values on everyone else or as some politicians put it, I'm personally opposed to abortion but I don't want to impose my values on anyone else. Everyone should be able to choose their own perspective regarding this issue of abortion.

Well friends, all of law is a matter of a choice to impose values on someone else. I mean there are people who believe it is okay for them to drive drunk. And some people believe that it is okay for them to steal your car. Other people believe it is okay for them to punch you in the nose or break into your house. We could not live as a society together if we were not imposing values on many people who disagree. The only issue is what value is appropriate. Which value should we choose? It is entirely a makeweight, empty argument to attack pro-lifers for imposing values. The entire US Criminal Code and the State's Criminal Code and the City's Criminal Code is an imposition of society's values upon other people.

Clearly many children are unwanted and will be abused or grow up desperately poor, if abortion is declared illegal. Children would be abused if abortion is declared illegal because child abuse is the result of having an unwanted child.

The response to that is that is a myth. There was a major national study done of the causes of child abuse about 20 years ago. Interestingly, they found that over 90% of abused children were wanted children. That is, their mothers and fathers wanted the pregnancy to happen. Many of the abused children had dad or mom's names. If child abuse was linked in some fashion to wanting a child, then child abuse should have radically fallen in the last 30 years since abortion has been legalized. After all, we have had 40 million abortions. But, in fact, statistically, child abuse has gone through the roof in the last 30 years. There was almost a 30% increase in child abuse just in the first half of the decade of the 90's.

And you know it really doesn't make any sense to say that the cure for potential abuse of children is to kill them. I mean think about what someone is saying when they say, "Well, it is possible that a child will be abused, therefore, they ought to be aborted." The remedy for child abuse is not eliminating the child. The remedy for child abuse is trying to affect the behavior of an adult who would abuse.

But, honestly, I have a real problem with the whole idea of “unwanted” people and measuring life and a person’s right to life by whether or not they are wanted. We have lots of unwanted people in our country. Homeless people are unwanted. People with Alzheimer’s are often unwanted. Folks in nursing homes are unwanted. Severely disabled people are unwanted. There were, for many years, in lots of communities minorities who were unwanted. If we start measuring a person’s right to life based on whether they are wanted or not, where does this end?

And, friends, it is not as if we haven’t seen the effects of this in the very recent past. During the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials following WWII there was evidence that was produced that established that the German medical community and German society, in general, had accepted a rule that certain kinds of people could be killed because they didn’t have a good quality of life. The killings started with abortions in very difficult cases. And it gradually extended to abortion on demand. And then when abortion became widespread, persons whose lives were considered in the German words “devoid of value” were killed. First to go were handicapped infants and children, and then the mentally ill, then the terminally ill. Voluntary euthanasia was followed by involuntary euthanasia.

See, once we move from the ethic which says life is to be protected and is sacred from the moment of conception, to the end of life through natural death, we are involved in a set of subjective judgments and arguments that no one can make other than God. The fact was that when Germany began classifying people as not worthy of life, they destroyed the rights of everyone. There were 275,000 Aryan German men, women and children killed before the Holocaust. 275,000. Unwanted does not mean not valuable, unworthy of being protected.

I wonder how many of you, who are sitting here listening to the message today, are the product of unplanned pregnancies. You were, what some people might call, an accident. But you are no accident to God. You didn’t surprise him. Your conception and your life are not unwanted by God.

How about the fact that some children are diagnosed with terrible deformities before birth?

Let me read to you a letter from the mother of a severely handicapped child. She writes:

“When I first became pregnant, I had no idea what the Lord had in store for me and my beautiful baby girl. I had never given any thought to the possibility of having a handicapped child. I had never even been around someone who was handicapped. I thought handicapped children were born only to people who took drugs or something. Surely, that could never happen to completely normal me. After an emergency C-Section, I delivered a precious baby girl. We named her Liana Rose. The doctors and nurses calmed all our fears about the C-Section

and told us that Liana was perfectly normal. She certainly was the most beautiful baby I had ever seen.

At nine months we began to notice that Liana was not sitting up or trying to crawl. As naïve new parents, we thought it was because her grandma and grandpa held her all the time. Just before she turned one, we took her to the pediatrician to see if anything was wrong. We were stunned when the doctor told us that he thought she had a brain tumor. His supposition was shortly proven wrong, but that was just the beginning of an emotional roller coaster.

When Liana was 13 months old, she was accurately diagnosed as having severe cerebral palsy. But she was so perfect looking. How could this have happened? Didn't God love me? Didn't he love my baby girl? Looking back, it is a wonder that my marriage and my sanity survived all the extreme ups and downs. We were told and willingly believed that with therapy Liana would walk and talk. Well, so what if she couldn't win the Olympics?

During this time I was dealing with the grief of three miscarriages and we were having frequent money worries. But with just a little more therapy, Liana would walk. Just a little more time and she would talk. No. No. Her progress was slow and painfully gained. We soon had to accept that she would never walk or run, or dance, and her speech was all but impossible to understand. Our goals were lowered again and again and again. Now we simply hoped to get her out of diapers.

When Liana was five, I had a healthy baby boy. About this time my husband, Alan, became a Christian and we prayed and prayed for Liana. We took her to healing services and had others pray for her and us. Doesn't God love innocent little girls? Was I being punished for something? How could God be so cruel? There were times when I was very mad at God for not healing Liana.

After yet another miscarriage, it seemed we would not have any more children. I can laugh now at that. God was beginning something unimaginably wonderful in our lives and he would use Liana to do it. My heart broke every time the neighbor kids came to ask if Liana's little brother, Lyle, could come out and play while Liana was ignored. Then I noticed a lively little girl in a wheel chair that rode the bus Liana took every day that drove her to school and therapy. The bus driver mentioned the little girl needed a place to stay while her father was out of the country. I thought she might be a perfect friend for Liana. And that is how Kelly came into our lives. Through a series of circumstances, we had Kelly for almost four years and so began our career as foster parents.

Over the next ten years 20 children came through our home. We had babies, teenagers, hurt ones, handicapped ones – every kind of challenge you could think of and some you can't. God was using us in a miraculous way. We saw healings of every kind, but the most important thing was we noted that Liana

loved each and every one of these children with her whole heart. She accepted them just as they were, unconditionally, unreservedly. She taught them and us that there was no one we couldn't love, no matter how unlovable they seemed. She taught me that every one has something to give and that God can use anyone. Liana, who has almost no ability to care for herself, showed me how to care for others. My innocent little lamb loves with the love of Jesus. How God has used her! I now know that God is not cruel. He is infinite in his love and goodness. Of all the things I would not have chosen, having a handicapped child ranks at the top. Of all the blessings in my life, Liana has been the greatest and she has taught me that the greatest of these is love. The most important thing I have learned from Liana is that we are all handicapped and that God loves us just as we are. He doesn't need to heal us and make us perfect in order to love us. If we were all perfect, we would not need him and we would not need each other. By the way, it has occurred to me that when the abortion of handicapped babies is discussed, the parents of handicapped children are never asked for input." The letter is signed Alan and Alicia Roberts.

There is a lot of truth packed into that letter. I wish every couple and every mom or dad who is diagnosed as having a child with some deformity could sit down with a couple like Alan and Alicia and find out from them, "how do you do it?" before some abortion doctor gets their hands on a frightened woman or couple and says, "You have to make a decision and you have to make it now." God blesses people's obedience. The fact is all of us in our hearts are cowards and all of us want an easy path in life and no one voluntarily chooses severe trials. But if trials come our way, then the only path for us to take is trust and obedience.

The last argument...

Pro-lifers don't care about women and they don't care about babies once they are born.

Some people have actually gotten to call pro-lifers fetus lovers. I want you to see a video of what some of the women and men in this church are doing. Of all of the charges that can be raised against those who are involved in pro-life work, this is perhaps the most unfair and most scurrilous charge – that these are people who don't care or love other people or care about folks once they are born.