As Reformed Christians, we rely on God's revealed Word, the Bible, for determining truth, and we look to it as our only infallible guide for faith and action. It is our authority for understanding the distinction between good and evil and for determining what is moral and immoral.

The biblical case for the protection of unborn human life from the moment of fertilization

The position on abortion of Presbyterians Pro-Life is built on Scriptural truths:

1. God places higher value on human beings than on the rest of his creation.

Human beings are made uniquely, in the image of God (1), and are not only distinct from the rest of creation (2), but also are rulers and stewards of everything else created by God (3). Fertilization and the resulting birth of a baby are not simply acts which continue the human race. Rather, fertilization is a blessing of God (4). This fruit of the love between a husband and wife is one evidence of God's love and sovereignty (5). The birth of a baby is a reward; a gift or heritage from God (6).

2. The meaning and purpose God has for each human life begins before birth.

Scripture commonly refers to fertilization, rather than birth, as the moment of our beginning (7). God speaks of us as known, cared for, protected, and loved by Him before birth (8). He often announces His specific purpose for individuals while they are yet unborn (9). The Hebrew word yeled and the Greek word brephos, used to refer to newborns and youth, are used in Scripture to refer to the unborn. This teaches us the continuity of existence before and after birth (10).
3. **God forbids us to kill innocent human life(12).**

Scripture makes no distinction regarding our humanness, born and unborn. Therefore, it forbids the destruction of innocent human life including unborn babies. *The Westminster Standards*, a confessional statement shared by most Reformed churches, includes in the sins forbidden by the sixth commandment "...*neglecting or withdrawing the lawful or necessary means of preservation of life*" (13), and forbids the taking of innocent life while demanding the preservation of life from the moment of fertilization to natural death:

"*The Sixth Commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others*" (14).

4. **God requires us to protect and care for the needy and helpless (15)**

The duty to "bear one another's burdens" applies to pregnancy exactly as to every other aspect of human need. It is our task as Christian disciples and servants, even in the most desperate of circumstances, to use the resources God has provided to find solutions to problem pregnancies that allow both mother and baby to live and prosper.

5. **God freely offers forgiveness and restoration to the repentant (16)**

God is rich in mercy and slow to anger. He offers forgiveness, healing, and new life through Christ. We, the Church, are God's agents of reconciliation in the world, and it is our calling to extend the compassion, understanding, and grace of God both to those involved in sex outside
of marriage and to those who have had abortions. We are to make the forgiveness, healing, and restoration available in Christ known to women and men who find themselves in these difficult circumstances, and to lead them gently toward repentance and faith in Christ (17).

6. **Scriptural teaching regarding the value of human life and our responsibility to protect and care for innocent life applies in every case** (18).

Just as those of us already born who were conceived in incest or rape, or who are handicapped, or who live in dire situations of need are protected from being killed by the injunctions of Scripture, so those yet unborn who are conceived in the same circumstances are protected.

In circumstances where physical complications of pregnancy develop, every attempt should be made to preserve the lives of both mother and child.

**The biblical case for decision-making prior to fertilization**

Responsible decision-making regarding pregnancies arises from the biblical teaching concerning life and sexuality

A decision to enter into a sexual relationship should be in keeping with the Scriptural teaching regarding chastity outside marriage and fidelity within marriage (19), and it should acknowledge God's full intent for such marriage, including pregnancy and the forming of a family (20).

Because fertilization is the point at which a human life is formed, contraception should act only to prevent fertilization. Contraception that acts to destroy the newly formed life is, in fact, a form of abortion.

**The Dangers of Departure from Biblical Guidance on the Sanctity of Life**

Many Christian denominations have sought cultural and humanist answers to crisis pregnancies. One of these is The Presbyterian Church (USA), whose policy document adopted
by the General Assembly in 1992 (21) says that:

*Problem pregnancies are the result of, and influenced by, so many complicated and insolvable circumstances that we have neither the wisdom nor the authority to address or decide each situation.*

Presbyterians Pro-Life rejects such a position to be incompatible with Reformed theology because it considers moral judgments to be a matter of each woman's individual interpretation of what is right or wrong in her particular crisis situation, and fails to establish a biblical defense for killing innocent unborn human beings. Any position that departs from the Church's historical teaching on abortion (22) is based on a situational, quality-of-life ethic which is in direct contradiction to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Among denominations in the Reformed tradition, The PC(USA) is in serious moral error in its teaching on abortion.

**The goal of Presbyterians Pro-Life with respect to abortion**

Presbyterians Pro-Life takes a prophetic and pastoral stance within the Reformed Body of Churches. In our pastoral role, we seek both to aid and equip Reformed bodies in upholding the sacred value of human life and the family. We are a prophetic witness to denominations such as The PC(USA) which have departed from the historic Christian view that God, who made us in His own image, has forbidden us to shed innocent blood. We plead with such denominations to begin to promote the protection of unborn life and to counsel for solutions to problem pregnancies which allow both mother and baby to live and receive the blessing of God.

Our prophetic voice is expressed through the process of appeal provided for by Presbyterian government and by any other means not forbidden by Scripture, church constitutions, or the laws of the land.

We trust that through the mercy and grace of God our witness and work in Presbyterian and Reformed bodies will effect change in the whole society.

**Endnotes**

2. Genesis 1:26; Genesis 2:20; Psalm 8:5.

3. Genesis 1:26-30, 2:19-20; Psalm 8:6-8; Book of Confessions, 3.02; 4.006; 6.023; 7.010.

4. I Samuel 1:1-20

5. Genesis 4:1; 29:30-33.

6. Psalm 127:3-5.


8. Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:4,5; Ecclesiastes 11:5; Job 31:15.

9. Genesis 16:11,12; Genesis 25:23; Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:4,5; Galatians 1:15,16; Matthew 1:18-25.


11. Human sperm and eggs both have 23 chromosomes. At fertilization, when sperm and egg are united, a single cell of 46 chromosomes is formed. From that point on, all that's added is time and nourishment.


15. Proverbs 24:11,12; Psalm 10:17,18; Psalm 41:1; Matthew 18:10.


17. 11 Corinthians 5:18.


22. "...for the fetus, though enclosed in the womb of its mother, is already a human being, and it is almost a monstrous crime to rob it of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy. If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a fetus in the womb before it has come to light."


"This Assembly regards the destruction by parents of their own offspring, before birth, with abhorrence, as a crime against God and against nature."

- General Assembly, 1869

"The fetus is a human life to be protected by the criminal law from the moment when the ovum if fertilized....As Christians, we believe that this should not be an individual decision on the part of the physician and couple. Their decision should be limited and restrained by the larger society."

-PCUS General Assembly, 1962

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