JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

ABORTION

Why We Are Pro-Life, and Why Only the Gospel Will Change It

> The church is pro-life and anti-abortion, because God sees and forms every child in the womb. But politics, truth and science will not end abortion. Only the gospel will, so the way to protect the unborn is to reach the women facing that decision.

MAIN TEXT
Psalm 139:13-16

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SERIES
We're Honoring to All People, Week 4 of 5

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. Clear is kind: the church will state where it stands, and its general stance is pro-life and anti-abortion, while leaving room for nuance in individual people's situations.
2. He is less interested in posturing than pastoring. The series is about people, not about holding and broadcasting positions.
3. Scripture treats the unborn as a person under God's care. Psalm 139 says God saw the unformed substance, so the clump of cells is a baby, and conception is the work of God rather than the work of science.
4. Life begins at conception, and based on Psalm 139 it could be pushed back further to the mind of God.
5. Over 98% of abortions are for convenience reasons rather than the rare and horrific circumstances that dominate the debate, though those circumstances are real and God can do a great work in that pain.
6. Contraceptives are a matter of conscience, and the church supports couples seeking fertility help. His conscience rule: if you are preventing pregnancy and think or know you are pregnant, shift gears, take a test, see a doctor, and have the baby.
7. Politics will not solve abortion. Roe v. Wade being overturned while abortion numbers rise is a hollow victory, and Isaiah 30 warns that trusting Pharaoh's shelter ends in shame.
8. Truth by itself is largely ineffectual, as Pilate's response to Jesus shows, and science does not settle it either, since 96% of surveyed biologists say life begins at fertilization and it changes nothing.
9. The gospel is the only solution, because it offers a lifeline to redemption for a woman who has had an abortion and power to overcome for a woman considering one.
10. This is close to home. One in four women will have an abortion by 45, and the ones he knows are conservative, so the only way to protect the unborn is to reach the women making the decision.
11. The urgency of that mission is why he refused to slow down as a new pastor, and why the church must become a church God can trust with people.

WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/3BW2Br_zT_g

READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/abortion

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is the fourth message in a five-week series on honoring all people, anchored in one conviction: clear is kind. This message states the church's position on abortion plainly. It is also a message about people more than positions. Keep both in view the whole way through.

This subject is sensitive for many people in the room. Some have had an abortion. Some have pressured someone into one. Some carry a story they have never told. Be caring in delivery while staying clear. Say early, and mean it: "I love you, I care for you, and I am not intending in any way to be ugly or dismissive of anybody's situation."

Do not try to deliver a scientific dissertation. The message moves in short scenes, like a variety show, and lands on the gospel. Several sections use survey data and charts; know your sources and have the charts ready.

Introduction

> PSALM 139:13-16 ESV
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> [13] For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. [14] I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. [15] My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. [16] Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

I am aware that what we are talking about today is sensitive for many people. Throughout this series we have anchored everything in one thought: **clear is kind.** We are not trying to be ugly by stating our positions. We just want you to know where we stand.

I am not going to give you a scientific dissertation. I am not a scientist, and my science class stood very firmly between me and my high school diploma. And we cannot speak to every issue; for one thing, the Golden Corral summons us. My goal is for everyone here and everyone watching online to know where our church stands.

OUR GENERAL STANCE

If you need to put us in a camp: **we are pro-life, and we are anti-abortion.** Here is the statement of the Assemblies of God, which our church shares:

> Every human life, from conception through death, is to be valued, respected, nurtured, and protected. God is both giver and sustainer of life; He alone has the power to determine its beginning and ending.

> The Scriptures regularly treat the unborn child as a person under the care of God. The Bible always recognizes the prenatal phase of life as that of a child, and not a mere appendage to the mother's body to be aborted at will.
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> The Assemblies of God views the practice of abortion as an evil that has been inflicted upon millions of innocent babies and that will threaten millions more in the years to come. Abortion is a morally unacceptable alternative for birth control, population control, sex selection, and the elimination of the physically and mentally handicapped. Certain parts of the world are already experiencing serious population imbalances as a result of the systematic abortion of female babies. The advocacy and practice of so-called partial birth abortion of babies is particularly heinous.
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> There is no biblical basis for a pregnant woman to terminate her unborn child. The long historical tradition of orthodox Christianity prohibits abortion. We therefore expressly deny that this supposed legal "right" automatically confers upon the pregnant woman the moral right to abort her unborn child.

WHY "GENERAL" STANCE: NUANCE

I called that our *general* stance because there is such a thing as nuance. Picture a spectrum: no nuance at all on one end, all nuance on the other, and in between, where most thoughtful people land, some nuance. People on the right and the left of any issue can still have nuance: the ability to look at a situation and say, "Maybe more is going on than I think." We want to be a church that embraces the nuance of people's lives and meets people where they are.

My position on everything is firm, until I'm the one going through it. Everybody has a made-up mind until they find themselves in a particular situation.

I am less interested in posturing. I am more interested in pastoring. On topics like this, pastors can fall into the trap of posturing, peacocking to show off and get attention. But what I care about is not positions. It is people. We are a church for all people.

1. What the Bible Says About the Unborn

Have the congregation say it: "The Bible says."

Psalm 139 shows how involved the Lord is in the creation of a baby. Before you ever had a day, every day of your life was written in His book. And verse 16 is profound for our day: **"Your eyes saw my unformed substance"** (Psalm 139:16).

You will hear people call a baby in the womb a fetus, an embryo, or my favorite, "a clump of cells." But that clump of cells is a baby, because God sees that baby in its unformed substance. **A baby is a baby, whether it is running around your house screaming or in its mother's belly.**

> **ECCLESIASTES 11:5** ESV
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> [5] As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

Conception and pregnancy are not merely the work of science or biology. They are the work of God, who breathes life. When Christians reduce this to scientific debate, I think Jesus would say to us what He said to

the Sadducees: “you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29).

> **HOSEA 12:3** ESV
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> [3] In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God.

In Genesis, Jacob came out of the womb with “his hand holding Esau’s heel” (Genesis 25:26). Even before Jacob was born, the Lord had spoken over him: “the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). There was intention, purpose and destiny on his life before he drew a breath. There is intention and purpose on every unborn baby’s life.

WHEN DOES LIFE BEGIN?

Most evangelical pastors would say life begins at conception. I agree, and **this is the position of our church: life begins at conception.**

But based on what we have just read, you could back it up even further: life begins in the mind of God. God was involved with you long before you were a baby, long before you were a kid, and long before you were a teenager driving your parents crazy. God is involved with you now, and He wants to be involved with your family.

2. The Hard Cases, and God in the Pain

When abortion comes up, the defense you usually hear is that we have a duty to people who have been through horrible situations. People really do go through horrible situations, and we want to be mindful of that. But it is easy to assume that every abortion is for someone who walked through something unspeakable. That is rarely the case.

[Show the chart of the reasons women give for having had an abortion.] Women surveyed could select more than one reason, so the numbers add up to more than 100%:

- At the top, 74%: not ready; it would interfere with work, school or caregiving.
- Then: cannot afford a baby right now; relationship problems or not wanting to be a single mother; done having children.
- Then a drastic drop: about 1% pregnancy from rape, 0.8% risk to the mother’s health, 0.5% a fetal health problem, less than 0.5% pregnancy from incest, and 0.1% risk to the mother’s life.

Anyone with a heart understands the bottom of that list, even if they are not for it. But the lion’s share, **over 98%, are reasons of convenience.** Abortion is a morally unacceptable alternative to birth control. I don’t know that “my boyfriend and I might not make it” is a good reason to end a life. “We don’t have the money right now”? Everybody here with kids didn’t have the money.

There are horrendous situations, and we must acknowledge the nuance. I will never understand pregnancy or childbirth; I gave birth to a kidney stone a few years ago and decided I was done. If someone comes into my office and says, “I’m thinking about an abortion until I can make another $10,000 a year,” that is an easy

counseling session. If someone says, “My uncle raped me and I’m pregnant,” your pastor is going to be squirming. It is horrible.

But if you find yourself with an unwanted pregnancy, even under the most heinous circumstances, **God can do a great work in your pain.**

Illustration: Judah and Tamar. Genesis 38 is a grotesque story of prostitution and incest. Judah gets his daughter-in-law Tamar pregnant. Yet God used that pregnancy: from the line of her son Perez came King David, and Jesus Christ. Do not underestimate what God can do in your situation. And we will walk with you as best we can.

3. Contraception and Fertility Treatment

There is some muddiness in the relationship between contraception and abortion, and most of it comes from people talking. Some Christian traditions see contraceptives as thwarting the will of God. Some see them as equal to abortion. Some believe in “maximum fertility.” Others, probably the majority, say contraception is a matter of conscience. That is where I land, and where we land. If you want to use something that prevents pregnancy, go for it.

Where it gets blurry is that with some contraceptives, the line between contraception and termination is debated, and the science moves over five- and ten-year periods. We do not support the termination of pregnancies. But I am not a doctor or a scientist, and you should not need a master’s degree in biology to honor the Lord. So here is a guiding rule you can live by in good conscience:

If you are actively preventing pregnancy, and you think or know you are pregnant, shift gears, take a test, see a doctor, and let’s have a baby. That is our position on contraceptives.

A word on fertility treatment. There are many opinions coming from denominational leaders right now on fertility treatments. I know many people who have struggled to conceive. Let me be clear: if you need help having a baby, we support you. We stand with you, we will pray with you and believe God in your process, and I will dedicate your baby. Pray, get a word from the Lord, be Spirit-led, and if God leads you to get help having a baby, go get help having a baby.

4. Politics Will Not Fix It

This series is not about positions; it is about people. But the position most people care about is the political one, so let me say it plainly: **we are for the unborn in this church.**

When it comes to the politics of abortion, the lines get drawn clearly, and it all comes down to Roe v. Wade. A few years ago, Roe v. Wade was overturned. I was surprised; I never thought it would happen. I was not one of the pastors who got on the internet with confetti cannons, and I was called weak and woke for it. There were two reasons. First, I didn’t know if it was real. If I opened my banking app and saw $3 million, I’d give it a minute before I went and bought a Corvette. Second, I wanted to see how it would shake out. I am not interested in a hollow victory.

[Show the chart of U.S. abortion numbers over the last 60 years.]

- When Roe v. Wade was decided, there were about 745,000 recorded abortions. The numbers before that are hard to know, since abortion was illegal; estimates run from 200,000 to 2 million.
- By 1980, it was over 1.5 million, and it peaked at about 1.6 million.
- From the 2000s through the 2010s it declined, falling under a million by 2020, a drop of more than 30%.
- Since 2020, while Roe v. Wade has been overturned, abortions are back on an upward trend.

The numbers can be a false flag. Abortions performed in Alabama have dropped to virtually nothing, but people are driving to other states to get them. The abortions happening in Alabama are down; abortions by Alabamians are not.

Let me be clear, because this is "let me mishear everything the preacher says" month: **I do not think abortion should be legal.** But this is not about legal and illegal. Too many of us find our victories on the political plane. **To overturn Roe v. Wade and see abortions increase is, by all metrics, a loss.** If you are eating salad to lose weight and you are getting bigger, the salad is not working. The goal is not for Roe v. Wade to be overturned. The goal is for abortions to stop.

> **ISAIAH 30:1-3** ESV
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> [1] "Ah, stubborn children," declares the LORD, "who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; [2] who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! [3] Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.

You could read it, "Ah, stubborn church." This is about trusting in governmental leaders and government resources. Those who place their hope in the government will find their shame in the government. If a president, senator or governor is the best thing that has happened to the church in 50 years, we need new pastors, new missionaries and new denominational leaders.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD" (Psalm 121:1-2). The inference is plain: my help does not come from the hills. It comes from the Lord.

Am I saying we should rise up in resistance? No. But **the solution to abortion is not going to be found in the political arena.** We got what we were promised, and it is getting worse.

5. Truth and Science Will Not Fix It

Let me state it again for anyone typing my email address into their phone: **I am pro-life and anti-abortion, but I have virtually no hope that this will change through any other means than the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

Let me take the scenic route to the close.

You will hear, "We have to stand for truth." But at times truth by itself is almost entirely ineffectual. Truth without Jesus Christ does not set you free (see John 8:31-32). I could talk for 30 minutes about how this shirt is black, and it would be true, and it would not help anyone.

Consider: Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He came "to bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37). He said, "I tell the truth" (John 8:45). Then, in the highest political conversation of His earthly life, He spoke the truth to Pilate, and Pilate answered, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). This was truth to power, and the power was unmoved. There is a blue-in-the-face quality to truth. You have someone in your family you have told and told and told.

The truth is that life starts at conception. But look at what Americans believe. *[Show the chart.]*

- 35% say life begins at or around conception.
- 14% say at a heartbeat.
- 4% say elsewhere in the first trimester, and 4% in the second trimester.
- 11% say in the third trimester, at viability.
- 18% say not until birth.
- 13% have not thought about it.

Only 35% are on the same page. Legislation is not getting it done, and truth is not getting it done.

"Well, that's because they don't believe in God; they believe in science." Let's look at the science. *[Show the chart.]* In one survey of about 5,600 biologists, a group that leaned heavily left (most identified as Democrats and as pro-choice, and most were not religious), **96% said life begins at fertilization.** That is what the science says. And still only 35% of Americans agree.

Politics is not working. Truth is not working. Science is not working.

6. Only the Gospel Will Fix It

> ROMANS 1:16 ESV
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> [16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The gospel is the power of God. It is what makes the difference.

I want our church to help many women. I know people who run buses and open clinics to help women considering abortion, and I love it. I see our church active in those things in the future. But money won't fix it. Support won't fix it. Resources won't fix it. Adoption won't fix it. All of those are good, but **only the gospel of Jesus Christ will fix it.**

- **For a woman who has had an abortion,** the gospel is a lifeline to redemption and a restored life. It can lift a heavy conscience and get her out from under guilt and shame, bad dreams and haunting thoughts, so she can step into the purposes of God for her life.
- **For a woman considering an abortion,** the gospel gives power to overcome. Maybe it is something traumatic. Maybe it is the weight of "we don't have enough money," "my relationship is falling apart," "my mom is all over me," or "my dad has disowned me." The gospel can give her strength to face what may well look like insurmountable odds, and to do what seems impossible.

The gospel changes people, and it changes the world.

7. One in Four Women: This Is About People

The name of this series is For All People. This message is not about a position. It is about people.

Abortion can feel far off, especially for conservatives. We think, "That's a liberal thing. They're for it, we're against it, so they're doing it and we're not." But **every person I know who has had an abortion is a conservative.**

[Show the chart.]

- About one in four American women will have an abortion by age 45. Not liberal women, not Black women, not white women: American women.
- Another 15% will seriously consider it and decide not to.

It is likely that a woman in your house, or the house to your right, to your left or across the street, has had an abortion. One in four women in Saraland. In Satsuma. In Creola. And in the impoverished communities south of us, the numbers are surely higher.

The only way to protect the unborn is to reach the women who will make the decision whether or not to go through with it. All the posturing and positioning does not change the weight a woman feels that takes her to that decision. Nobody walks into an abortion clinic because it is a fun Thursday afternoon. And we have not even touched the men who are affected by this.

Conclusion: Too Urgent to Slow Down

This series is one of our eight ministry values. Before I came here, I covered the walls of an empty apartment with big easel sticky notes and wrote down what I believed the Lord had for this church, and the eight values came together. My first series was on the value that we build everything on the finished work of Jesus Christ. My second was on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20): we relentlessly pursue the mission. I am convinced that people are dying and going to hell, and if a church does not get in between them and that, it is going to happen.

Illustration: the biggest giver. It was my eighth Sunday as pastor, and I was about to preach the third message on the Great Commission. Walking through the auditorium before service, I saw a man who was visibly upset. I stopped to talk with him, and within about 90 seconds he was red-faced, telling me I was ruining the church. Then he said, "All you preach about are people outside the church."

Here is the kicker: he was the biggest giver in the church, and we were in a bad spot month to month. I had to decide whether I would stick to the mission or bend to what people thought I ought to do. I made a decision. He is not here anymore, and neither is his money.

It would have been easy to slam the brakes. Pastors and denominational leaders told me to slow down. But one in four women are headed toward an abortion because they have no hope and feel helpless, either

because they are not in a church or because they are in one and not receiving. **I don't have time to wait. It is urgent.** People need a church where they can experience the life-changing power of the cross.

We are going to be a church that God can trust with people. Not a church that sings the songs you like or has the right amount of haze in the room, but a church where, if the pastor does not shake someone's hand or know their name, somebody will. A church God can trust with sinners.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray over the church and over women considering abortion: that God would send the hurting, the broken, the poor and those who have slipped through the cracks of other churches; that this would be a healing and restoring place; and that something would happen to cause women heading toward abortion to say, "Let me give church a try."

Illustration: Hagar. Hagar became pregnant in an ugly situation and was driven off by the wife of the man who got her pregnant. She was a prime candidate for an abortion. As she ran, the angel of the Lord met her and asked, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" (Genesis 16:8). He sent her back with a promise, and she called the Lord who spoke to her "a God of seeing" (Genesis 16:13): the God who sees me.

Pray that everyone who walks into this church, whatever they have walked through, would feel seen by God, and that God would send women who need to be seen by Him.



ABOUT

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Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, an author, and the creator of POWER 27. He has given more than 20 years to the local church and helps pastors and ministry leaders lead BIG.

Free outlines, articles and leadership resources: **jasonmayfield.com**

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