



THE PASTOR'S VOICE

Insights from Church Leaders

The Pastor's Voice Podcast Season 2: Episode 16

Transcript: Abortion, Laws and the Silence of the Church

Reuel Sample: It seems that, oh, from the 1990s, early 2000 to about 2016, the whole issue of abortion kind of went quiet for a while. Pro-life organizations were doing the work that Reprotection was doing, but it didn't really gain a lot of national platform. The Republican Party had basically given up on it and everything else. But now we've seen a resurgence of laws and we've got two types of laws being passed in various states, ones that protect unborn children, like the ones we're having seeing in Texas and Florida and Alabama. And then you have other places that basically say it that there are no rights given to that unborn child. I'm thinking specifically of Colorado and probably California, and these two laws are diametrically opposed. Cathie, what's going on?

Cathie Humbarger: Well, you're exactly right. We continue to soldier on and to save babies in crisis pregnancy centers and in front of abortion facilities as best we could. But as long as the Supreme Court decision, the original one was Roe and then Casey followed several years later, we really couldn't do a whole lot. But with the Supreme Court, the makeup of the Supreme Court changing and also agreeing to hear the Mississippi law that limits abortions to less than 15 weeks, we were pretty much stuck. We could pass laws that regulated the abortion facilities, which we did. But beyond that, we couldn't do a whole lot. So with the Supreme Court, though, agreeing to hear the case out of Mississippi, everything has changed. We are of the opinion that something some victory will come out of the decision, which will be announced in probably mid to late June of this summer. We don't know what that is. However, there is an increasing optimism that the outcome will be a return of authority to the states to

decide how abortion will be handled in their states. So as that has been unfolding, there were some states that had in place already what was referred to as a trigger law, but we call it contingency now because nobody wants to pull the trigger now, of course.

Cathie Humbarger: But the contingency laws that states have passed would say that on the day the Supreme Court returns the authority back to the states abortion is illegal in that state. So several states have already passed those laws. Several states have on the books pre ROE laws that they can begin enforcing again. But some states have done nothing. So on the other side, there are a growing number of states, including Colorado and California, that have passed legislation to enshrine in their state the right to abortion through all nine months at taxpayer expense, you name it, everything that you can think of to promote women having abortions has been enacted in some of these state legislatures. We are at a at a pivot point like we have not seen since the original ROE decision was handed down, where the states that have passed the laws saying that abortion is illegal in their states. I mean, that's that's amazing. And it could happen under this pending decision. But at the same time, we have states that will become what they're calling themselves, sanctuary states, where women from other states that where they can't get abortions can come there and they'll be treated with all kinds of financial aid, etc., so that these states that are protecting abortion will be the financial moneymaking centers for abortion providers, including Planned Parenthood, across the country.

Cathie Humbarger: These are horrific laws. But we're not giving up on those states. And here's why. There are many violations that are occurring in those states that have nothing to do with abortion facility regulations or abortion regulations. They have to do with other things like the environment and number of handicapped parking spaces and their parking lot. There are all kinds of opportunities for us to continue the protection strategy in those states. Now, the states that concern me are the ones that have done nothing. And Indiana is one of them, unfortunately, where if the Supreme Court returns the authority to the states, they'll have to battle this out at that point. Some of those 12 states, 10 to 12 states that have done nothing are going to be pro abortion anyway. So it doesn't take a lot of imagination to understand that where the abortion industry is going to focus their time, their resources and their venom will be on the states that have done nothing that are not not identified as pro-abortion states. I don't know if that makes sense, but I see a huge battle coming up.

Reuel Sample: So if you're in those states and you are pro-life oriented, that these next two election cycles are going to be critical to passing and keeping these laws in place.

Cathie Humbarger: Right. But one thing that I'm concerned about is the success that the abortion industry has had in reframing abortion into women's health care. So those organizations, those people who really want to continue abortion in their state, even if it's been known as an anti or a pro-life state, have to respond to the argument that, well, this is women's health care. We're being we're going to be a bigoted label state if we don't include this in women's health care. And that won't happen if abortion is banned here or severely limited.

Reuel Sample: Well, let's let's unpack that. Let's unpack that argument. There's statistics in the abortion industry have always been hard to come by. I mean, it's it's it all depends on where you go. What are the top reasons that women give when they go in for an abortion?

Cathie Humbarger: Well, interestingly enough, the best source of of information like that is the Guttmacher Institute, and that's the research arm of the abortion industry. The reality is a lot of women make that decision because they don't want to interrupt their life plan like they're in school, in college. And they they think that a baby is going to make it impossible for them to complete their college degree. The extended family, the father, the baby have a huge influence on whether the woman decides for abortion or not. You can imagine a young girl, maybe 17 or 18, is in a crisis pregnancy. Her parents don't want to be embarrassed, perhaps. And they say if you don't get this abortion, you can't live here anymore. And then you have the boyfriend wanting to avoid supporting a child for the rest of his life. So those influences make a huge difference in the ultimate decision. If, on the other hand, this same woman, young girl, has a supportive family that says, you don't have to, you don't have to choose abortion, we'll help you. We'll be with you. If the father wants the baby and is willing to be a part of the of the decision and the response is part of the responsibility makes all the difference in the world. There are some women that are coerced into having abortions and that fits kind of hand-in-glove with the last comment I made. Many women think they can't afford a baby because and I'm not I'm not demeaning any of these reasons that women are dealing with. I mean, they're all legitimate reasons and concerns. However, I think with a little

support and a little help beyond the birth of the baby, we would see an increasing number of women choosing not to have abortions.

Reuel Sample: Where is the church in the decision of all these folks?

Cathie Humbarger: Well, for the most part, silent. I struggle to even get church pastors to pray in churches every week for women who might be considering an abortion, it would seem that there would be some place in the time of prayer for a prayer to be inserted every week because pastors don't know. But statistics show that women identifying as Christians have abortions, too. There may be a woman sitting in the pews that are contemplating that decision that very week.

Reuel Sample: And all they're getting from the church probably is condemnation. How dare you have sex outside of marriage? How dare you have? How dare you do all this? You get your life in order. Then you can come back into the church.

Cathie Humbarger: Pretty much. Pretty much. And that's so sad.

Reuel Sample: It's not just sad, Cathie. It goes against every aspect of the gospel. I'm a church man. That's why I started this podcast, because I think churches need to have an incredible impact upon the Christian worldview of its people. And I think this is one area where churches have consistently let their people down. They have no plans, they have no action. They have nothing in place for members of their church community or even their surrounding communities who are facing the issue of abortion. They think they give them no options. They give them they don't come alongside. They say, you take care of it, then you can come back inside.

Cathie Humbarger: Right. I have spoken with many women who have an abortion decision in their past who tell me that this surely must be the unforgivable sin because it is the only sin that they never hear about in church. You hear about all kinds of other things, other sins, and the fact that there's grace and mercy and forgiveness at the foot of the cross. But abortion is never mentioned. I've also heard from pastors that they really don't want to touch this issue because they know there are people sitting in their church pews who have had an abortion or encourage somebody to have an abortion or whatever. And they don't want to make them feel bad by bringing this up. Well, that train

of thought leads to well, then you're denying them the opportunity to confess their sin and receive forgiveness, which is what they desperately need.

Reuel Sample: So and let's clear up. Let's let's clear up that whole issue of an unforgivable sin really quickly is that Scripture teaches that the only unforgivable sin is the sin that is not repented from. Or the sin that is lifted up as being not a sin. There is nothing that Jesus cannot forgive and restore from.

Cathie Humbarger: Absolutely. So I think pastors need to understand that, especially in the times in which we're living, they need to be bold about speaking truth to our culture and always, always covered with grace and forgiveness and leading people to a place of repentance. It seems like we don't want to call sin sin anymore. I think we have a huge job to educate pastors and help them understand how to talk about the issue of abortion. I think part of the mindset that I've heard some share is that the pastor wants to preach the gospel and that will somehow cover the issues that we're facing. And people will just come to a conclusion that, well, what they're doing is wrong. I don't know about everybody else, but I'm a dumb sheep and I need for I need to hear about sin and what it is, and not just in a generic way, but I am more convicted if I hear the pastor talk about the sins that are prevalent in my life and then, oh my gosh, I've offended the Lord in such a grievous way, and then I can repent and be restored. So anyway, that's I'm not a theologian. I don't sit in the pastor's chair. I know that they have many, many struggles in their church. And I'm sure that they don't want to add one more by bringing up the issue of abortion. But we just need to continue encouraging them and praying for them that their eyes are open.

Reuel Sample: This is a big issue, and I agree with you that the preached word is very, very important. But what do you think are some of the practical things that churches can do? We didn't talk about this, particularly when we were getting ready for this podcast, but I think it's an important thing that we can pause and maybe explore is that preaching about abortion is important, but what are things that the community of Christ can do in addition to preaching it?

Cathie Humbarger: Well, absolutely. To get involved in their local pro-life organizations, be it a right to life organization or a pregnancy resource center. All of us are always crying for volunteers. So that's something that can be made, that

parishioners can be made aware of and directed to. Not everyone is called to active pro-life ministry, and I know that may sound odd, but there are a lot of issues that grieve the heart of the Lord. But everyone can pray, find out who their candidates are, finding out who their candidates are when elections are coming up. Support those pro-life candidates with finances and volunteering.

Reuel Sample: Some of the other practical things that I would I would think that churches can do if if a member of their community is pregnant and is facing or is looking at a decision of abortion, I think instead of expelling that person from the congregation, that congregation should surround that young lady with all the love and support and the options that they can is that we'll help you with medical bills, we will provide a home for the baby. We'll help with adoption costs. Anything to give that that that woman a chance to make a decision that does not end the life of the baby. But as I said before, I think churches often say, well, we've got to just expel this person to be buffeted at the hands of the Satan and then she'll come back when she's repented of her sins. And that is such a stupid decision.

Cathie Humbarger: Yeah. Would we want to somebody to say you have the sin of gluttony, but we don't want to see you at any potluck in this church until you get that under control.

Reuel Sample: Exactly. Exactly. We want to we want to stop abortion, but we don't want to talk about sex in with a with our youth group or we don't want to talk about sex from the pulpit. But you better not have it now that it's so ridiculous what churches do and don't do. And not only this situation, but in others.

Cathie Humbarger: Right. And there is at least one ministry that has a turnkey program for churches that want to include a more active church specific program. I'm trying to get the name of the organization slipped my mind, but there's a turnkey ministry that can be enacted or started in any church.

Reuel Sample: Well, we'll make sure that we have that link to the show notes, because I think that would be very important for churches to and individuals to figure that out.

Cathie Humbarger: Right. And I know there's this huge discussion about the separation of church and state. And pastors feel that they're limited in about what they can talk about politically. However, they can encourage in the first place that a whole program to unpack that. But there is nothing that would prohibit a pastor from participating and pro-life events. Maybe the city has a pro-life march or whatever events there are, and let the parishioners know that he's participating and invite the members of his congregation to join him. That would be a huge thing. So and also encouraging the parishioners to understand or to learn who the pro-life candidates are and if he would be willing to say, I have pledged not to vote for anyone who is not committed to upholding the value of life, and I encourage you to do the same, something like that. I mean, that's not advocating for a specific candidate, but it is indicating to the parishioners who look to their pastor for guidance that this is an important issue. And not only the pastor, but also the parishioners can become involved and understand based on their pastor's words and actions, that this is something that they should do.

Reuel Sample: This is a Christian podcast, and so this all comes down to a worldview. When does life begin and who has sovereignty over our own bodies? What does scripture say about conception? When does life begin? Does it begin at 15 weeks? Is it does it begin at viability or how do Christians measure the beginning of human life?

Cathie Humbarger: There are many passages that talk about the life beginning in the mother's womb, and we are only limited by the time we spend looking up those passages to see that from God's perspective, the minute that conception happens or the second, I should say a life is there. And that means that all the passages about not murdering a human life apply. So it's interesting Reuel that those of us who are Christians know the truth because we got it from the Truth Giver. However, these positions are supported from the people, even in the group of folks that don't care a fig what the Bible says because you only need to pick up an embryology textbook that is used in medical schools across the country and in science. If we want to go to the popular adage that's going around now, science says that life begins at the moment of conception. So just because people don't care what the Bible says. These truths are still from God. And there is that. It's just amazes me the proof that's out there. But you are exactly right. From a Christian perspective, if we look into this, it is abundantly clear that the Lord considers life to begin at the moment of conception, and He expects us not to take that life. That's his domain and his own.

Reuel Sample: Same thing goes with sovereignty over our own bodies. The the current mantra is my body and my choice. But as Christians, these aren't our bodies.

Cathie Humbarger: Well, it's Christians. And it's just informed people in the first place. The baby has a different DNA than the mother the baby could well have and usually does a different blood type. If it's my body, my choice, how can a woman deliver a boy, a baby, different sex. The list goes on. It's absolutely provable that it is not her body and it is not her choice.

Reuel Sample: It comes down to is that these bodies that have been given to us are the temples of God. They belong. They belong to God. It's the ultimate stewardship, is that we take care of these bodies and make sure that we do what is right with these bodies because they belong to God, not to us.

Cathie Humbarger: Right. Right. And the fact that the baby, the baby's body is not the mother's body is easily provable.

Reuel Sample: Cathie, we have talked a lot about a lot of things today and I so appreciate your time. What is your message to the people of God today, especially to those who have gone through abortions or who perhaps are listening to this podcast and are thinking that abortion is the only way out? What is your message to the people of God today?

Cathie Humbarger: I'd like to begin this part of my comments with one of my very favorite life saver scripture passages, and that is "May the God of hope. For those who saw joy and peace as we trusted him so that we'll overflow with hope in the power of the Holy Spirit" and that Scripture passages is Romans 15:13. And I think in my opinion, from where I sit, the word hope is the word to focus on for women who have made an abortion decision. There is hope and healing at the foot of the cross. The Lord does not want you to stay in a prison cell of regret. He wants you healed so that you can be about the business of helping other women make the choice for life. So I think hope is so important for women who have had an abortion. Hope is also important for those of us who continue this fight. We've been disappointed so many times from our earthly perspective about our lack of progress in making abortion unthinkable in our land and

around the world. However, God's plan is perfect and His timing is perfect. He calls us to be faithful and do what we can with the opportunities he puts in front of us.

Cathie Humbarger: Also, He, through understanding the whole process of prenatal development and where how that be convinced that this life is a life. From the very beginning and then acting on that, looking for opportunities to make a difference. And one of the things that I think we have come to a point where those of us who have gone through that understanding of what's going on. We get angry. I understand that. And we should be angry not for ourselves, but for these unborn little boys and girls who have been victims. But we need to channel that anger to action. And if the Lord's calling you to that contact ReProtection, we have a website and a Facebook ReProtection.org is our website. And then just search for ReProtection on Facebook. We're always looking for volunteers, eyes and ears on the ground. And there are many, many other ways to get involved. At the very least, I don't want to say it that way. The most important thing you can do is intercede on behalf of these women who are in a place of making this decision and intercede before the Lord for the life of these unborn boys and girls.

Reuel Sample: You know, Cathie, every every podcast, I ask people to give a message to the people of God. I have never failed to be moved by what they say. And that includes your message today. Thank you for. Thank you for joining us.

Cathie Humbarger: My pleasure. Thank you for having me on and for standing for life.