

Issues
of
LIFE

Volume 10



THE CHRISTIAN
Appeal



Issues of Life

As miserable Job squatted on that ash pile and scraped his dreadful sores with a hunk of broken pottery, he yelled, “Let the day of my birth be erased, and the night I was conceived. Let that day be turned to darkness. Let it be lost even to God on high.”

As his agony increased, in Job 3 we hear him screaming, “Let that night be childless. Let it have no joy. . . Curse that day for failing to shut my mother’s womb, for letting me be born to see all this trouble.”

Then he moaned to his three horrified friends, “Why wasn’t I born dead? Why didn’t I die as I came from the womb?” Morosely, he wailed, “Had I died at birth, I would now be at peace. I would be asleep and at rest.”

Pro-choice advocates of abortion today would applaud Job’s thinking here. The only way to keep a baby from being unhappy, they tell us, is for it to be born dead. Somehow they fail to take into account what else that aborted baby might miss.

Again this month in his series of devotional essays, Senior Editor Gene Shelburne asks us to look soberly with him at crucial “Issues of Life.”



John Guiley

“Yet you, Lord,
are our Father.
We are the clay,
you are the potter;
We are all
the work of your hand.”



Isaiah 64

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Issues of Life

Wastebasket Babies

Three years after she left her newborn daughter, still linked to the umbilical cord and placenta, face-down in a wastebasket, a Lansing, Michigan, mother pled guilty to second-degree murder.

The *Lansing State Journal* and a local TV station reported that the 26-year-old mother faced more than 27 years in prison for what she did to her baby. A fair penalty for murder? Perhaps. Until we realize that not very far from that mother's apartment was a licensed professional who could have been paid to dispose of her baby.

Four years after that Michigan mother trashed her newborn, residents of a Houston-area apartment found an infant abandoned on a grassy area near their complex. The infant lay "naked in the bushes, soiled with dirt, covered with ants" but still alive, Fox News reported.

"How could they do this to their own baby?" one neighbor exclaimed. "It's just heartless." Without doubt. But is it one whit more heartless than driving away from an abortion clinic and leaving behind one's own flesh-and-blood in giblets in a medical waste bag?

Why is one abandonment a criminal offense while the other is a constitutionally protected right?

Three years ago Reuters reported


that a southern California mother buried her newborn daughter under pieces of asphalt and rubble in a crevice in a riverbed. The makeshift grave was not far from a bicycle path, so fortunately somebody heard the baby crying and summoned help.

In this case the unwanted baby survived. Deputies and paramedics who rescued her thwarted this mother's wishes. Both our law enforcement and our medical personnel pooled their efforts to save this newborn.

While most of us applaud their successful efforts, does it make one whit of sense that they would have been legally required to defend that mother's right to kill the same baby at an abortion clinic nearby?

These stories are way too common nowadays. Up in Buffalo, New York, someone who was scavenging cans in the garbage at the Botanical Gardens one Friday afternoon found instead the body of a baby in a shoebox.

According to AP, the 19-year-old mother at her arraignment was charged with second-degree murder. I don't know if she was finally convicted, but I do know that if she had paid a doctor to do it for her, the same court would have defended his right to kill the child.

Tell me what is sensible and fair about any of this. 

Issues of Life

"For Whom the Bell Tolls"

I let seven decades slip by before I finally opened up a copy of Victor Hugo's novel *Les Miserables*. At the time I write this, I've been plowing through it for almost three months now and I'm still nowhere near the end.

In one fascinating part, the main hero Jean Valjean hides out in a convent that normally admits no males except the bishop and the undertaker. And Valjean's friend, the crippled gardener.

As a Protestant pastor who has never preached for a church that had a bell, I took special interest in Hugo's description of the way the nuns used the convent bell to communicate in a place where few words were spoken.

Valjean and his rescuer hatched a scheme to get him accepted in that females-only cloister. Their ruse involved the illegal burial of a particularly holy nun who was dying. She had to die before their plan could roll.

They knew it was time to get into gear—the nun was dead—when her demise was signaled by the convent bells. Hugo says they heard "the death knell."

I don't guess I'd know one if I heard it. Would you?

Somewhere I dug up the ancient info that in long-past years the church bells announced a death by ringing nine times for a man, six times for a


woman, three times for a child, and none for a suicide. But the count varied depending both on the era and the place.

Ernest Hemingway had something like this in mind when he titled his famous novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. It was a tale about war, and many were dying.

The small-town clapboard church my father grew up in had a bell. The deacons rang it every Sunday morning right before time for worship. Nobody had to die.

Some time before I was ten, they tore down that aging church building and replaced it with a fancy brick edifice without a steeple or a bell. They did hang the historic bell on a pole beside the new church, but the only time I heard it ring again was on their hundred-year anniversary. By then all its original ringers were dead.

Steeple bells with clappers are almost extinct. Most churches that ring bells today do so electronically. On the rare Sunday morning when I'm not busily at work inside my own church, if I step outside at the right hour, I can hear the carillon of a church over a mile away.

Have you ever looked for "bells" in your Bible? No description of a church or of heaven includes a single bell. I'm glad our later ancestors discovered how much a tolling bell can bless our souls. 

Issues of Life

Baby Killing Churches

American churches must bear much of the blame for millions of baby deaths in the past half century.

Without the support of loud pro-abortion voices in liberal religious circles, *Roe vs. Wade* likely never would have seen daylight in our land. And without that landmark court case, baby-killing would never have become a legal medical industry in our nation.

Early in the summer of 2017, however, just south of Portland, Oregon, a church on the far-right fringe of the Pentecostal spectrum joined our brothers and sisters whose left-wing views cause babies to die.

Travis and Sarah Mitchell belong to that church. Called the Followers of Christ Church, this group opts for prayer in lieu of traditional medicine. So when the Mitchells' twin babies showed up prematurely, barely able to breathe, instead of calling 911 or rushing to a nearby hospital, they opted to join family and friends in earnest prayer while the little ones gasped for air.

When one of the twins died, the medical examiner was summoned to the Mitchell home. Seeing that the other baby also was having trouble breathing, this doctor managed to save her life.


All of this happened in March 2017. Over a year later the dead

baby's parents pled guilty to negligent homicide. For at least seven years the surviving twin will grow up without their parenting, since Mama and Daddy will be behind bars.

AP reported that this was the fifth criminal case involving this particular church and the death of a child. Would you agree with the local district attorney who called these "senseless and avoidable deaths"?

The dead twin can blame her fate on her great-grandfather. He founded this church with its deadly anti-medical bias. As an expression of his faith, he taught his children (and their children, and at least two generations after them) that when it comes time for their babies to be born, they should not call a doctor.

Meanwhile, just around the corner or just a few houses down the street from the homes of these no-doc extremists live other believers who are just as fervently convicted that a woman about to have a baby ought to call a doctor. To end the life of the fetus.

Don't call a doctor to save the newborn's life, one group of Christians preach. Call a doctor to keep the baby from being born alive, the other group advises. So we have two sects of Christians giving opposite instructions, with the same result: dead babies. 

Issues of Life

"Kill My Baby"

"I tripped and fell while I was mopping," the patient told the ER staff in a Bakersfield, California, hospital. But the bruises on her belly told them another story.

Police who were alerted by the hospital staff soon extracted the truth. She had been pregnant, but she didn't want a baby to care for. So she had her boyfriend punch her in the belly over and over to kill the baby in her womb.

Their do-it-yourself abortion worked. The repeated belly punches fractured the skull of the approximately 30-week-old fetus—a baby girl—and caused her to be born prematurely. Authorities said those injuries were the cause of the infant's death.

When this story first surfaced on the news media, Bakersfield prosecutors still were wondering how to handle the case. Any possible criminal charges depended in large part on what the coroner's report confirmed about how the baby was killed.

It will be interesting to see who (if anybody) eventually will be blamed for killing that baby, and, if any charges are filed, just what they will be.


It's a cinch this couple broke several California laws. Abortions in that state are legal if the mother-to-be has been pregnant less than twenty-six weeks. But this implies that the killer

has a license to kill. And this mother put off her baby's demise a month too long.

According to the news writers, though, California law defines killing a fetus "with malice aforethought" as murder. Again, of course, that law does not restrict anyone who has a medical license to kill unborn babies on purpose.

If the mother of this particular dead baby really did seek the aid of her boyfriend to end the life of her daughter, people close to the case doubt that charges of murder will be pursued.

It seems apparent from Exodus 21:22-25 that the Creator of all life would not agree. This biblical law clearly stipulates that God approves and specifies what he considers just punishment for anyone who injures or kills an unborn child. "You are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand. . . ." In other words, the penalty should be sure, but fair.

We applaud the local authorities for dealing with this case with careful deliberation. But I wonder. How can they punish this couple and still give legal approval to professionals who do worse damage to unborn babies every day and leave them just as dead? 

Issues of Life

Embryo Repair

Do you remember the last time you heard that some young athlete had collapsed during practice and died of sudden heart failure?

Quite likely, without even knowing it, the victim had a disease called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. Medical experts tell us that about 1 in 500 people suffer from this disease, and most of them have it because a certain gene mutated in them (or in their ancestors) while they were still embryos.

Do I need to tell you that I am not a medical expert? Unlike my medical doctor grandson Nick and his colleagues, most of this subject is way over my head.

Last summer, though, somebody called my attention to a fairly technical article in the journal called *Nature*. This article reported a breakthrough by a research team in Oregon Health and Science University.

This team has come up with a way to use a space-age gene-editing tool to correct the gene mutation that causes the heart disease described above and to keep it from being passed on to later generations. The article indicated that embryos can be programmed to “fix themselves” if the defective genes are edited early enough.

All of this amazes me. Advances in genetic research are moving too


fast for most of us to keep up. Even the experts in related fields struggle to stay abreast. And I’m thankful—as I’m sure you are too—for the almost daily improvements in medical diagnostic equipment and treatment techniques.

While I applaud those who keep upgrading today’s doctoring, I struggle to resolve the ethical conflicts posed by some of these recent advances.

Here are top-notch scientists who are plying their skills and insights to produce high-tech tools that doctors can use to repair unborn babies still in the embryo stage.

At the same time—often in the same labs—equally brilliant researchers work right alongside these baby-saving pioneers to develop more efficient tools and techniques to snuff out the lives of unborn children.

Not only do I find it hard to reconcile these diametrically opposed results, but the clash intensifies when we note that the babies being saved do have potential health concerns while many of the aborted babies don’t. How can that make sense?

Obviously it’s not just the medical how-to’s that are above my pay grade here. The apparent ethical confusion leaves my simple head spinning. 

Issues of Life

Choose Your State

A Fox News headline late in January 2019 caught my attention. Up in Virginia, so the news report told us, a delegate in their state house, a Democrat named Kathy Tran, was vociferously backing a bill to remove most restrictions on abortion.

Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin, speaking in opposition both to this bill and to its recent predecessor in New York, lamented that these new laws would “legalize abortion up to the moment of birth.”

Tran based the Virginia bill on what she called women’s “right to make healthcare decisions about their own bodies.”

Evidently this elected state leader needs to go back and take a high school biology class again. The body this new law endangers and affects most is not that of the mother. It’s her son or daughter who may get turned into mince-meat without having a legal right to say yes or no.

And, just like most of her left-leaning cohorts, Kathy Tran obviously is out of step with most of her constituency. Whereas the public popularity of abortion peaked about the time Tran was finishing her schooling, studies show that the percentage of abortions versus live births in America has dropped steadily in the past decade.

Today that ratio of abortions

compared to live births is actually equal to or slightly below where it was when the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in the *Roe vs. Wade* decision in 1973.


I wonder. Do politicians in New York and Virginia know they are swimming upstream against the actual thoughts and actions of the majority of their voters when they vote to remove abortion controls?

Have they paid any attention to the available abortion statistics, or have they listened only to the strident demands of a now-dying generation of moral liberals?

The same week when Fox News told us about the hubbub over Virginia’s proposed pro-abortion law, they also ran a news account of a murder in Phoenix, Arizona.

In this sad incident, a rider stabbed and killed his pregnant Lyft driver. And the killer got charged with two murders, one for the driver and one for her unborn baby.

Arizona law still protects unborn children from violent death. Right when New York’s new abortion law now allows non-doctors to kill them.

Back when most Americans shared the biblical view that humans are made in God’s image and their life is therefore sacred, legal confusion like this did not exist. 

Issues of Life

Behind and Before

In the early 1980s scientists at what was then called the Goddard Space Flight Center in Florida became obsessed with Eta Carinae, one of the largest stars in Earth's galaxy. They predicted it was about to self-destruct.

I don't have any idea what these space gurus were seeing that ignited those fears. Experts tell us this massive star has a mass one hundred times that of our sun. That's too big for me even to imagine. It's certainly big enough to make a mighty big bang if it blows.

But these researchers, who aired their fears in a published report, warned that Eta Carinae might explode and become what star specialists call a supernova—an enormous ball of fire flying across the sky.

To avoid causing instant panic, these star-studiers hurried to explain that the disaster might occur within the next ten thousand years.

Then came the real kicker. Eta Carinae is so far away from Earth, they told us, that light from that famous star takes nine thousand years to reach our planet. So—for all we know—the feared explosion may have gone boom several millennia before humans began recording their history. It may already be history.

This true tale about that distant star got me to thinking about matters much closer to home.

When you and I hang our new calendars each year, we're like those space scientists. We tend to focus on what lies ahead. Our hopes and fears are wrapped up in what might take place in our tomorrows.

This perspective is almost universal, and it's not wrong. But, at best, it is partial.

Our lives are not unlike the cosmic scenario for Eta Carinae. While we're pondering what may happen in the future, we can't afford to ignore what has already transpired in the past. Even in the distant past. For everything that happens today, and everything that will happen in the year ahead, will be shaped in some way by the events and discoveries and ideas and mistakes of the past.

Just as Adam's fall has befallen us, and Abraham's faith has blessed us, so our future lives will be modified by the choices and performance of ancestors long past.

Sometimes we like to welcome a New Year as a fresh start, but such illusions are merely wistful thinking. Just as in Holy Communion we always participate in what was, what is, and what will be, so every moment or event in life is a complex mix of past, present, and future.

Happy New Year, we say. But nothing is ever new.



Issues of Life

"An Ever-rolling Stream"

In an apt metaphor the poet William Kelley Woolfitt captured what I was feeling and thinking as I tore off the final calendar pages last year. He wrote, "Time leaks like a slit grain-sack."

What concerned me most was not the lost days and hours. With each chime of the clock during the past year, I'd heard the news of the passing of another longtime friend.

Historian Will Durant got it right when he observed that "time is the greatest vandal of them all."

The week before I write these words was a somber one for me. In that single week I lost six friends. Some of them had been a part of my world as long as I can remember. In an instant—in some cases unexpectedly—they were gone. And I stood beside the beds of three others who can't last long.

That grand old hymn-writer Isaac Watts must have suffered similar losses when he penned his famous lines in "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past."

*Time, like an ever-rolling
stream,
Bears all its sons away.
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.*

In the days when I heard my own aging parents expressing dismay that so many of their contemporaries were vanishing, I was too young to empathize with their sense of loss. Today I understand.

Surely one of the finest blessings of youth lies in the blissful lack of awareness that time is passing, that days and years are evaporating, never to be reclaimed and enjoyed again. When we're three years old (or twenty-three), most of us think we'll live forever. At that age we can say "Happy New Year!" and mean it!

As we mature, though, we become increasingly aware that the grains of sand just keep dropping in the hourglass of life, and nothing we do will stop them. As Russell Becker put it, "We inherit a past and invade a future in every present moment."

The treadmill of time just keeps churning, and nothing we say or do will slow its pace. So we will do well to join Isaac Watts in praying,

*Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while
troubles last,
And our eternal home.*



Issues of Life

Baby Overboard

When you go fishing, you never know what you may catch. If you doubt that, talk to the off-duty Florida firefighter who was fishing with a couple of friends a hundred feet off the inlet at Boynton Beach. What he first thought was a doll floating in the ocean turned out to be a dead human baby.

Just by visual examination the police could not determine the nationality or ethnicity of the naked infant. Unlike more mature bodies with tattoos or scars or dental peculiarities, this two-week-old little one presented the authorities no identifying marks.

The police captain who appealed to the public for help in locating the unknown parents said, “It’s gut-wrenching.”

All of this happened several months ago. By now DNA tests may have given the police some usable leads. The medical examiner likely has ruled on whether the child was dead before she was tossed into the ocean or if she drowned.

Was that small body thrown into the waves from the shore, or maybe from a nearby bridge? Or was she discarded by somebody in one of the countless boats in that region? Police didn’t have a clue.

Someone suggested that the little

one might have been part of an illegal immigrant boatload coming from Cuba or Haiti or some similar location. Not a bad guess, but it was just a guess.

The one thing everybody did know was that this tiny baby was dead, and every person involved in the case was devastated that it was too late to save her.

Meanwhile, just a few hundred miles north, top political officials in at least two states would make front-page headlines and boast blatantly in televised interviews that they were passing laws to make it legal to kill any baby just two weeks younger than this one.

At the same time, a bevy of far-left politicians were lobbying loudly and pushing for laws to make it legal for doctors to kill any newborn the parents decided not to keep.

While authorities on Florida’s coast wept over the demise of a baby, top leaders in Virginia and New York hoped to win votes by legalizing the killing of babies.

The divide between these two viewpoints is wider than the ocean that baby girl was floating in. The new push to legalize baby killing in several states makes it clear that far too many Americans no longer listen to God when he says, “Thou shalt not kill.”



Issues of Life

The Wages of Sin

Our nation increasingly is run by a generation who choose to ignore and violate biblical moral standards.

In the last two decades state after state has legalized everything from euthanizing the elderly to killing pre-born (and most recently, just-born) babies. And we are now reversing centuries of laws against same-gender sex and public nudity and fornication.

Not only are we moderns closing our eyes to the Bible’s rules, but evidently we’re also blind to its clear warning that breaking these rules is a good way for us to get broken. No longer do we believe the scriptural warning that “the wages of sin is death.”

Anybody who doubts this just needs to pay closer attention to daily news reports.

Take, for example, that off-duty 25-year-old Baltimore police officer who early in 2019 died from a heroin overdose in a motel room he was sharing with his girlfriend. Probably he would still be alive and enforcing the law today if he had paid closer attention to God’s laws about sex outside of marriage.

Or, just a few months earlier, a well-known news anchor in Los Angeles met an untimely death when he overdosed on methamphetamine in a California hotel. Fox News said he

had gone there for “a sexual encounter with a male companion.” The sexual sin he opted for cost him his life.

In far too many tragic cases, the sinner’s sin results in the death of an innocent victim. Like that poor baby who sat in a shopping cart while Mama unloaded her groceries. The drunk who smashed into the cart came away from the accident unscathed, but the toddler died.

Equally innocent was the New York City patient whose transplanted kidney infected him with the AIDS virus. He had done nothing to deserve such a fate, but health officials learned later that the kidney donor contracted HIV while having unprotected sex with another man. He sinned, and then passed the deadly disease to the transplant victim. The wages of his sin will be death.

Contrary to what many unbelievers assume, God’s moral rules are not arbitrary, harsh restrictions on human fun. His laws were put in place to protect us from the deadly dangers of immoral behavior.

The Father makes rules for his children for the same reason our parents taught us not to play with matches and to look both ways before we cross a street. Obeying his commandments will help us stay alive.



Issues of Life

Five Decades Later

Abortion has been legal in our nation for almost half a century now. So it may be past time for us to consider how this has impacted feminine mental health.

Right now, in this column, forget about the unfortunate women whose abortions were forced on them by embarrassed parents or irresponsible sex partners. Let's focus here on a woman who freely exercised her right to choose to end her unborn baby's life.

This reluctant mother-to-be leaves the abortion clinic relieved. Almost elated. Certainly grateful. At that moment she knows she has dodged whatever stress she would have faced if that infant had lived.

Now her budget won't have to scrunch up to cover diapers and Similac and childcare. Now her social calendar won't have to be rewritten to include a toddler. Now, if she isn't married, she has escaped the shame of bearing a child out of wedlock.

In the hours and days right after the abortion, a formerly pregnant woman's choice not to become a mother often will feel to her so right. So wise. It's obviously the only option worth considering.

But how will she feel about it decades later? In our present society, we have literally thousands of women


now facing the delayed impact of past abortions. Who cares about how this is now affecting them?

Now that the pressures of that long-ago moment are past and forgotten—now that the reasons for aborting that baby are no longer urgent and real, how does that woman who had the right to choose feel about her choice?

Is she like one sweet woman I know who, when somebody asks her how many children she has, still includes in her count the four-month-old fetus she miscarried decades ago?

The lady who opted for abortion when she was young understandably breathed a sigh of relief at that time. But now that maturity and perspective and faith color how she sees all of life, how does that could-have-been-a-mother feel about it several decades later?

What goes on in her mind when she remembers the first time she felt that little one kick inside her? Is her delight in her surviving children clouded at times when she remembers why one is missing?

I pray that any woman bearing such regret believes the Bible message that Jesus died on the cross to free us from the guilt of all our sins. Even this one. 

Issues of Life

Am I Dead?

Did you see the recent news blurb about the living, breathing fellow who got declared legally dead by Social Security? Someone whose identity did die, and the real John Doe now is having trouble proving he's still alive. Unfortunately, in this era of digital thievery, this problem emerges more often than we might expect.

When I was reading this story, the first thing that popped into my head was what Mark Twain said when a newspaper published his obituary. His now-famous response was, "The report of my death was an exaggeration."

Long before fake news became the norm, but in a pre-TV, pre-Facebook age, newspapers were the most common offenders in erroneously reporting deaths.

Somewhere I ran across a chuckle about how the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge reacted way back in the summer of 1816 when he read in some newspaper that he had committed suicide. "Indeed, sir," he wrote, "it is a most extraordinary thing that he should have hanged himself and yet at this moment be speaking to you."

Not many years after that, another famous writer, Rudyard Kipling, had a similar experience. "I've just read that I am dead," he wrote to the magazine that reported his demise. Then he


added, "Don't forget to delete me from your list of subscribers."

I have some sympathy with that magazine. In my monthly devotional magazine *The Christian Appeal*, we don't publish news or obituaries. But we are guilty far too often of mailing copies to the dead. "Mom's been dead for four months," one subscriber's son wrote recently. "Please to take her address off your mail list." Okay.

Almost gone—rapidly vanishing—are the days when most Americans looked at death through biblical eyes.

Once upon a time in our "Christian nation," all human bodies were treated as creatures made in God's image. Now seven states have legalized medical suicide, and others soon will follow. Of course, it's legal in all fifty states to medically murder unborn babies, but nobody considers news of their deaths worth reporting.

My funeral-preaching fellow-pastors and I know by hard experience that people often die at the most inconvenient times. Not meaning to complain, I sometimes quip, "People just won't die on schedule."

The truth is that all of us die on God's schedule. As Psalm 139 says, God is the One who, even before we're born, records in his book all the days of our lives. Life and death are his business, not ours. 

Issues of Life

No More Lucky Strikes

Laws just keep changing, don't they?

How many of my readers can remember what we called blue laws that closed stores on Sunday? Probably none of us were around during Prohibition when booze could not be sold legally, but a few of us recall WWII days when the speed limit on national highways was 35 mph.

I began thinking about this recently when I saw the news articles about a new law outlawing tobacco sales in none other than plush Beverly Hills.

As city officials there pushed to pass a new law to ban tobacco sales in their town, howls of protest erupted from merchants who saw it as a death knell for their tourist-oriented businesses.

Over half our states now have laws that ban smoking in public places—laws that would have been unheard of in the mid-1900s. But this proposed Beverly Hills municipal law would not just stop folks from lighting up. It would end legal tobacco product sales in grocery stores, pharmacies, hotels, and gas stations. With devastating effects on their businesses, the owners said.

Even those who fear the effects of second-hand tobacco smoke or those who just don't like to be engulfed in a tobacco cloud are surprised, though,


by this new conflict in California's left-leaning legal climate.

For decades now the Gold-rush state has led the nation in legalizing marijuana. If this latest Beverly Hills statute got approved, we wondered, would marijuana replace Lucky Strikes and Marlboros on the shelves of convenience stores? Would folks have to breathe weed fumes instead of cigar smoke?

As a non-resident of California, I likely don't know what I'm writing about. But that was my gut-level reaction to the Beverly Hills news. I realize, of course, that those of us in America's heartlands seldom understand what's brewing on either coast, east or west.

But we do have this much in common. All of us live in a world where the rules of life keep changing, and most of us resist those changes.

The same God who once said, "Don't eat pork chops or catfish," later said all foods are now okay. Jesus taught us that. But God's rules that protect human life have never budged an inch.

The hardest part of this for all of us is to know which of God's laws have morphed with his blessing and which ones we have re-written just to please ourselves. 

Issues of Life

So Soon Forgotten

Mac McClish was a charter member of my congregation. For almost four decades I was his pastor, and he became for me an encourager and a trusted friend.

Memories of Mac bubbled up recently when I was chuckling at a loving wife's actual description of her dead husband. Like Mac, the man had made his living in pest control. "He was the kindest man," his wife said. "He would not harm a fly."

Really?

Mac's been gone for almost a decade now, but that lady's comment brought him alive again in my mind.

Mac founded and operated McClish Pest Control, which in its heyday was easily the most successful pest control business in our trade area.

As age crept up on him and the inevitability of retirement loomed, Mac wisely prepared for that transition. He made his local, family-named business infinitely more sellable by franchising it as part of a nationally known pest control brand.

I'll never forget what happened several years later while I was writing Mac's funeral sermon and planning our final tribute to that good man.


The day before the funeral it

dawned on me that the managers/owners of Mac's old business might not have heard that he had died. And surely, I thought, some of them would want to attend his service to show their respect for their founder.

"Who?" the gal who answered their telephone blurted out. When I tried to explain why I was calling, she curtly informed me, "We don't have a local owner," and abruptly ended the call.

Needless to say, nobody from Mac's old company showed up at his grave the next day. They didn't even know him.

How sad, I thought. Just a decade before, thousands of folks in our city and people in all the small towns around us had hired his bug-killers, and even those who hadn't would have recognized his name. And now the people in a business he started don't know the man.

That's the harsh reality all of us face. Whether we are wise or foolish, "in the days to come, we will all be forgotten," the Bible tells us (Ecclesiastes 2:16 TEV). People like us vanish quickly. Even rulers "are soon forgotten" (1 Corinthians 2:7). "Like a cloud that fades and is gone, a man dies and never returns," Job lamented. "He is forgotten by all who knew him" (7:9 TEV). 

Issues of Life

Shaming the Nazis

We know we can't trust a lot of the news we hear reported nowadays, but I saw a recent report that historical researchers in Europe now think the number of Jews killed by Nazis in the Holocaust drastically exceeded the six million traditionally cited.

As atrocious as that bloody slice of history seems to most civilized people, how do we react when we hear that right here in America in the four decades since *Roe vs. Wade* we "Christians" have slaughtered more than ten times that many unborn babies.

In comparison, we are making Hitler and the Third Reich look like nice guys. And it's going to get worse, not better, if we keep on pretending that it's not happening here.

In his daily blog called "Denison Forum," Dr. Jim Denison recently revealed what some of us are allowing today's children to be taught about this.

He said that a woman named Amelia Bonow, the founder of a group named "Shout Your Abortion," has released a video in which she tells children that abortion doctors just "suck the pregnancy out." She tells them it's sort of like going to the dentist.

In that same day's blog, Denison told how Planned Parenthood in


Iowa put up billboards that pictured a woman saying, "I had an abortion, and I am not ashamed." This was part of their protest of a law Iowa's Gov. Kim Reynolds signed to ban abortions after a fetal heartbeat can be detected.

We used to proudly call the United States a Christian nation. Evidently we got over it. Of the hundreds of countries scattered across our planet, United Nations stats today document that only nine of those nations abort more babies than we do.

Only in Bulgaria, Cuba, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Romania, Russia, Sweden, and Ukraine do people legally exterminate more unborn babies than we do.

How can this be? Because organizations such as Planned Parenthood are doing an expert job of lulling to sleep our moral instincts.

As Alexandra DeSanctis reported in a recent *National Review* piece, Planned Parenthood aborted 321,384 babies in a single year and called this killing "health care." Of course, all decent people believe in health care.

Once upon a time a majority of Americans believed the Bible truth that humans bear God's image. In a nation that discards that belief, no human is safe. 

**"YOU
CLOTHED
me with
skin and
flesh,
and knit me
together
with bones
and sinews.
You have
granted me
life and
steadfast
love."**

*** Job 10**

Juana Shelburne

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