

It's Time to Speak, Yes, But ...
Various Readings
January 17, 2016

How many times have you heard someone start to speak and the first two words out of their mouth are, "Yes, but...?" "Yes butting" is one of the most popular pastimes for the pessimists of this world. "It sure is a nice day." "Yes, but it's going to snow tonight." It's hard to have a conversation about the weather without hearing a good deal of "yes, buts."

It's also hard to have a conversation about abortion, even among Christians, without a good deal of "yes butting." Abortion is a topic that has so polarized Americans that many people refuse to even talk about it. You hear things like, "Yes, I know it's wrong, but..." Today we are going to look at some of the "yes, buts" put forward to defend or ignore abortion, and see if those arguments hold up in light of Scripture.

It's time to speak. *"Yes, but abortion is a political issue and we shouldn't be dealing with political issues in church."*

The dictionary defines political as "of or concerned with government, the state, or politics." Given that definition, abortion is certainly a political issue. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all state laws forbidding abortion and made abortion legal during all nine months of pregnancy.

But is abortion just a political issue? The dictionary defines spiritual as "of or relating to God." With that definition, let's see if abortion is a spiritual issue.

Psalm 139: You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well (Ps 139:13-14 NIV).

Psalm 119: Your hands made me and formed me (Ps 119:73 NIV).

Psalm 127: Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him (Ps 127:3 NIV).

When you consider that abortion kills the work of God's hands, when it destroys what he has fearfully and wonderfully made, then, yes, abortion is very much a spiritual issue. Furthermore, the magnitude of this destruction of life is a pressing issue because it happens, in America, over 3,000 times every day.

Mark 10: People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them (Mk 10:13-16 NIV).

The children who are murdered through abortion are children that Jesus died for – just like you and me. Abortion is a very serious spiritual issue.

Proverbs 3: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil* (Pr 3:5-7 NIV).

Abortion is a spiritual issue because it leads people away from trusting God in times of distress. Abortion is, in fact, putting your trust in the god of death instead of the Lord of life. Listen to the words of Martin Luther.

Do you have the kind of heart that expects from [God] nothing but good, especially in distress and want, and renounces and forsakes all that is not God? Then you have the one true God. On the contrary, does your heart cling to something else, from which it hopes to receive more good and help than from God, and does it flee not to [God] but from him when things go wrong? Then you have an idol, another God.

It's time to speak. “Yes, but abortion doesn't have anything to do with me. I'm not going to have an abortion.” Technically, this objection is answered by saying abortion is a spiritual matter. However, since it is a common objection, we will address it separately.

Proverbs 31: *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy* (Pr 31:8-9 NIV).

James 1: *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world* (Jas 1:27 NIV).

Matthew 25: *The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me”* (Mt 25:40 NIV).

Scripture makes no bones about the fact that it is the responsibility of God's people to speak up for the vulnerable and the needy. This is a reoccurring theme in the Old Testament. The Book of Psalms calls God the *Father to the fatherless* and the *Defender of widows* (Ps 68:5). Malachi says that, on the Day of Judgment, those who oppress the needy will be treated the same as sorcerers and adulterers. From the king on down, God's people are responsible to speak up for and defend the vulnerable of society.

This theme also runs through the New Testament. The letter to the Romans tells us to *rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn* (Rom 12:15). The book of Galatians tells us to *carry each other's burdens* (Gal 6:2). According to James we are to *look after the orphans and widows* (Jas 1:27). Furthermore, Jesus says we must care for *the least of these* as if we were caring for him (Mt 25:40).

There is no doubt that clergy and laity alike have a God-given responsibility to defend those who cannot speak up for themselves or defend themselves. Remember that silence is the same as agreement.

It's time to speak. *"Yes, but the church exists to proclaim the Gospel, not to address social issues."*

John 8: The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (Jn 8:3-11 NIV).

Jesus met people where they were. He shared the Gospel by applying it to their lives in meaningful ways. The purpose of the church is to share the Gospel, and the social and moral concerns of our nation provide a perfect opportunity for the church to speak the Gospel message.

The effect of abortion on women, and on men, is devastating. When the reality of the decision to abort a baby sets in – and it almost always does sooner or later – it crushes people with a heavy load of guilt and hopelessness that can lead to despair. If there is a single reason for the church to speak on abortion, it is so that the people who have made that decision can hear the Gospel applied to their sin. If the church remains silent, these people will be led to believe that the sin of abortion is too big to be forgiven.

Romans 8: What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (Ro 8:31-32 NIV).

These words show us that life issues give the perfect opportunity to proclaim the Gospel. The Gospel message gives motivation to make good life decisions and avoid difficult life situations. We are people bought with the blood of Christ. As God's people, we can be sure that he will not forsake us when difficult decisions need to be made. We do not have to turn to death as a solution to life's issues. We can turn to Christ and choose life.

It's time to speak. *"Yes, but abortion is too controversial."*

Ezekiel 13: Because they lead my people astray, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace, and because, when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash, therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash that it is going to fall. Rain will come in torrents, and I will send hailstones

hurtling down, and violent winds will burst forth. When the wall collapses, will people not ask you, "Where is the whitewash you covered it with?" (Eze 13:10-12 NIV).

Not speaking about a specific evil because it's too controversial is the same as proclaiming peace when there is no peace. Our silence whitewashes a very bloody evil. Our silence pronounces a death sentence on innocent children whose only crime, and through no choice of their own, is being conceived. Our silence echos Satan's words to Eve, "Did God really say...?" "Did God really say abortion was wrong?" Our silence allows people to believe that the sin of abortion is okay. Our silence offers no hope to those who have made the wrong decision in the past.

John 14: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (Jn 14:27 NIV).

When we speak about abortion, it will stir up controversy. Generally, the truth of God brings a negative reaction from the sinful world. However, our bold speech will give us an opportunity to proclaim a peace the world can't give or understand. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ. This is a peace we can have even when the peace of our lives is disrupted. This is a peace that we can offer to those who have had their peace taken from them because of the sin of abortion.

It's time to speak. *"Yes, but abortion is divisive.*

Matthew 10: Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man's enemies will be the members of his own household. (Mt 10:34-36 NIV).

No one wants to see division in a congregation or a family. Sometimes it's good to be silent such as when the color of the carpet in the narthex isn't what you would have chosen. However, to be silent about abortion, just to avoid division, is a deadly silence.

Jesus said that, under certain circumstances, his coming would bring division. Jesus said that he is the only way to the Father (Jn 14:6). When that fact is raised, it brings division. However, to be silent on this point would undermine the very purpose of the church.

Jesus said that he came as God in the flesh (Jn 10:30). When that is stated, it brings division. But, to be silent on this point removes the very heart of the Gospel.

Jesus said that he came so that we might have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10). When that is proclaimed and applied to the unborn, it causes division. However, to be silent on this point ignores the Biblical truth that all human life, from the very moment of conception, is given by God and is precious to God.

You can certainly find more "yes, buts" than these five, but I guarantee you that not one

of them will stand up in light of God's Word. The church has a responsibility to uphold all Scriptural truths about life. The church also has a wonderful message to apply to abortion and those caught up in its evil. Our message is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness and love that our Savior has for all of us sinners.