

Should Abortion Be Allowed for Rape or Incest?

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I was raped at thirteen and had an abortion. What are you going to say about that?" The young woman looked at me squarely. A crowd had gathered for an impromptu abortion debate on the plaza at local college. All eyes were on me. In that moment, I faced two challenges. The first was moral: If a woman is raped and gets pregnant, what should she do? Does the Bible give clear teaching? The second was practical: How could I communicate the biblical view to this angry woman and the charged-up crowd?

I began by expressing concern for the rape victim and a desire to see the rapist punished. If a rape victim gets pregnant, the rapist not only forced *himself* on her; he forced a *baby* on her as well. He forced her into pregnancy, labor, and years of responsibility for a child she didn't consent to create. That's the full reality of what rape victims may face, and we must understand this.

After meeting the *practical* challenge, I turned to the moral challenge: Is it okay to have an abortion in the case of rape? It seems like a complex issue, but it's not. Since it is wrong for a victim of violence to turn around and inflict violence on another innocent human, abortion is wrong even in the case of rape or incest. The whole issue comes down to whether or not unborn children are human beings. After all, no one suggests that a rape victim should be allowed to kill her two-year-old who is the product of rape. If the unborn is the same kind of being as the two-year-old, he must be protected also.

So, what is the status of an unborn child? From the time of fertilization, he is a living, whole organism of the human species. He is actively developing each day. Like us, he needs only a proper environment and adequate nutrition to live. No essential change takes place from fertilization onward. The unborn aren't *potential* human beings. Rather, they *are* human beings with great potential.

Scripture says humans are made in God's image (Gn 1:26-27) and that it's wrong to kill them (Ex 20:13; Pr 6:16-19; Jr 22:3). Scripture does not distinguish between humans at an early stage of development and humans at a later stage, nor does it distinguish between those conceived in rape and those conceived otherwise. Human life is human life, period, and all vulnerable humans deserve protection (Pr 24:11-12).

After I clarified the biblical view, the woman laid down her anger and gave a heart-wrenching response. "This shouldn't have happened to me," she said. I agreed. Too often Christians forget this. They defend the unborn with passion but re-injure the rape victim in doing so. Don't make that mistake. Meet the *practical* challenge by acknowledging the rape victim and meet the *moral* challenge by showing that the unborn is a genuine human being. For more advice on talking to people about abortion, see my book, *Common Ground Without Compromise: 25 Questions to*

Create Dialogue on Abortion.