

Human Life is Sacred

1. The sacredness of human life is based on the fact that God made humanity in the image of God, an image which is retained even after the fall and which he seeks to renew through the indwelling life of Christ
 - Made in the image of God: Gen 1:26-27; 5:1
 - Retained after the fall:
 - Gen 9:6: Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.
 - Renewed through the indwelling of Christ:
 - Col 3:8-12: But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

2. God is intimately involved in the development process and the sustenance of every human life. Thus, to take human life without God-given justification is to stand in judgment of God's handiwork.
 - God's involvement in human development:
 - Gen 1:26; 2:7, 21-22
 - Ps 139:13-16: For 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. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
 - Job 10:8-12: "Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews? You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit."
 - Isaiah 49:5 (concerning Christ): And now the LORD says— he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength—
 - God's sustaining work:
 - Acts 17:24-28: "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. "For in him we live and move and have our being." As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'
 - Isaiah 49:15: Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!
 - Col 1:16-17: For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
 - Matt 6:25-32

3. We are created to be dependent creatures, dependent both on God and on others. Thus, the obvious dependent state of an unborn child, a mentally-handicapped child, or a senile senior does not diminish their humanity but highlights it.
 - Our dependence on God
 - Acts 17:24-28: see above
 - Isaiah 41:13-14: For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you," declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.
 - Job 12:10: In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.
 - Our dependence on others: Gen 2:18

4. The sacredness of life means that the church as a whole and its individual members must take concrete steps to care for and rescue those whose lives are endangered
 - The Israelite midwives and Moses' mother: Exo 1:15-2:10
 - The call to help aliens, orphans and widows in their distress
 - James 1:27: 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.
 - Exo 22:21-24: Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt. Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.
 - Lev 23:22: When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.
 - The call to care for widows, both by family members and the church:
 - 1 Tim 5:16: If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

5. We are accountable to God for the taking of any life. This does not mean that life cannot be taken (God sometimes commanded such), but it does mean that we cannot base the choice to take life on personal or even corporate preference.
 - Gen 9:5: And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.
 - Gen 4:6-7: Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it. (We must place our preferences for human life under God's mastery, and not be mastered by our preferences...David did very well in this regard relative to Saul, but poorly in regards to Uriah)

6. The sacredness of life does not mean we preserve our own lives at all costs. There are times when God calls us to lay down our lives for others and to lay down our lives for the sake of the gospel.
 - For others:
 - John 10:15: **just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep**
 - John 15:13: **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.**
 - For the sake of the gospel:

- John 12:25: **The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**
 - Stephen in Acts 7
 - Rev 6:9-11: When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.
7. Those who take life purposely and without the permission of God violate the command of God. God's disdain for breaking this command is reflected in the establishment of the death penalty.
- "Thou shall not murder": Ex 20:13; Luke 18:20; Rom 13:9
 - 1 Tim 1:9-10: We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine
 - God established death penalty for those who wrongfully take life
 - Gen 9:6: Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.
 - Ex 21:22-25: If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.
 - Rm 13:4: For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.
8. Neither developmental status nor functionality determines the value and worthiness of human life. Indeed we are all but seeds and shadows of what we will become.
- Developmental status does not determine value
 - Ex 21:22-24: If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,
 - Functionality does not determine value
 - Luke 14:13-14: **But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."**
 - As believers, we are all in a developmental state
 - 1 Cor 13:9-12: For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.
 - 1 Cor 15:42-44: So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

- Those who advocate the taking of life based on developmental or functional status, do so by classifying certain humans as non-persons
 - Scripture supports continuity of personhood from conception to adulthood
 - Ps 51:5-9: Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
 - Ps 139:13-16: For 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. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
 - Job 10:8-12: "Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews? You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit."
 - Isaiah 49:5 (concerning Christ): And now the LORD says— he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength—
 - Scripture supports the sanctity of life even when death is imminent
 - 2 Sam 1:5-16: The Amalekite's declaration that he had killed Saul was met by judgment by David
9. Our bodies are not our own and we do not have the right to do with them as we please. Thus, there is no preeminent right to choice over the destiny of an unborn child or the timing of one's death as an adult.
- Our bodies are not our own (1 Cor 6:19-20). Although Western thought trumpets the supremacy of autonomy and personal choice, such autonomy is not in accord with the Christian concept of freedom which is only afforded through obeying the Creator (Rm 6:18; Gal 5:1).
10. Scripture recognizes, predicts, and ordains the reality of suffering. While it gives latitude to lessen the effects of suffering, it moves us to call out to God for relief and does not support the cessation of suffering by the taking of life.
- Scripture and the reality of suffering
 - Gen 3:16-19
 - John 16:33: **I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.**
 - Job 1-2
 - A call to relieve suffering
 - Prov 31:6-7: Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.
 - When suffering, call out to God
 - 2 Cor 1:9-11: Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.
 - Ps 88

- 2 Sam 12:15-16: After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground.
 - Matt 8:5ff: When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help.
11. Because we will enjoy enduring life with God, we not fearfully or inordinately cling to life and necessarily exhaust all resources to resist death
- Acts 21:13: Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."
 - Matt 26:52-54: "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"
 - We need not fear death or inordinately seek to preserve the earthly body because while the earthly body is dependent on the human soul (which is the seat of human personhood) and does not come into being until the earthly body is created, the human soul is not dependent on the earthly body in regards to its future and will eventually find its home in a resurrected body (1 Cor 15:35-58).
 - "Life, for example, is a good gift from God, but survival can become an idol for health care. Health is a good gift, but it can be a very demanding god. The relief of pain is a good gift, but in the midst of pain it is nearly impossible to resist the temptation to make it an ultimate concern, to curse God or to damn our neighbors, to do or undo anything only for the sake of relieving our pain. And technology is a great gift, but we are easily tempted to expect it to do too much, to be the faithful savior, to rescue us from our own mortality and from our human vulnerability to suffering, to deliver us to our flourishing." Allen D. Verhey, "Faithfulness in the Face of Death" in Dignity and Dying: A Christian Appraisal, p. 58
12. The ultimate hope for escaping pain & suffering is not physical death (for those who do not know now Christ will suffer much more in the life to come), but in Christ and the promised resurrection of the body. Thus, while we need not fear death, we should not pursue it for the sake of escaping suffering.
- Rom 8:18-25: I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.
 - 1 Cor 15:35-58