

Abortion: Hard Cases

Do you support abortion for a woman who has been raped?

Many people who call themselves “pro-life” often make an exception for abortion when the pregnancy was the result of rape. This often comes out of a concern for the woman, who never engaged in any behavior that could lead to pregnancy, being compelled to give birth to the “rapist’s child.” While the situation is tragic, the moral factors are still the same; an abortion under these circumstances would take the life of an innocent child, which is unacceptable. The key to answering this question is to not only answer correctly, but compassionately as well, or else the message will be ignored. Steve Wagner from Stand to Reason answers the question perfectly when a woman at a pro-life exhibit told him that she was raped and had an abortion. He responded:

I said, “I think rape is seriously evil. It’s horrible what was done to you. And I think the rapist should be punished to the fullest extent of the law. I’ll bet the man who raped you was not punished, was he?” She said, “No.” I replied, “I’m so sorry. That shouldn’t happen. We should punish the rapist severely for his crime. But even when we do punish him, if the woman gets pregnant, I think we’ve let the rapist off easy. If the woman gets pregnant, the rapist not only perpetrated an act of violent assault; he also forced her to become a mother, such that if she wants to do what’s right, like everyone does, she has to carry to term. It’s wrong to put her in the position where she either has to carry a baby she didn’t consent to create (followed by giving birth and going through the pain of adoption) or she has to do this (I pointed to the pictures of aborted children) to the child. But it’s the rapist who did all of this. We’re too easy on him. He should be punished for all of these things.” My response here was totally centered on the woman and the injustice done to her. There’s one other point I needed to make explicitly, though, in order for the crowd to see the moral logic of our position.

After a few responses from the crowd, I said, “Why should the child pay for the crimes of his father?” I can easily use this sentence at the beginning of my response, but I know it will not be heard or understood. That’s why I always place it in the context of concern for the mother; then the audience can focus on its intuition that those who commit injustice are the ones who should be punished.

(To learn more about Steve Wagner and his ministry visit: <http://www.str.org/site/PageServer?pagename=StevesInfoPage>)

Another key point to remember:

1. A survey by the Elliot Institute showed that of 192 women who were impregnated by rape 80% of the women who chose to have an abortion regretted aborting their child.

Do you support abortion for a woman who would have a deformed child?

1. Empathize with the situation – Our pro-life response must take into account compassion and empathy for the pain that the parents of this child are going through. Their dream of “the perfect child” and fantasies of parenthood are now shattered and they may be contemplating abortion so that the child does not have to “suffer through life with a disability.” With this in mind, our objective is to show that abortion is not in the child’s best interests because life is always preferred to death no matter how hard life can be. For example, I attended a pro-life

talk at Arizona State University where I spoke with a moderately mentally handicapped student. It took him nearly thirty seconds and every ounce of strength in his body but he confided to me, “I’m glad that I wasn’t aborted.”

2. Compare to a born child – If a newborn were diagnosed with a disability or congenital defect, would we sanction his or her killing? In 1982 this occurred at an Indiana hospital where doctors and nurses, with the parent’s permission, starved a newborn Down syndrome child to death. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby_Doe_Law) While other couples came forward to adopt “baby Doe,” the child’s parents felt killing their newborn was the most compassionate thing they could do. If baby Doe’s story horrifies us, then aborting unborn children for the same reason should also horrify us, since unborn children are just as human as born children.
3. There are hundreds of parents who have put themselves on special lists to adopt disabled or terminally children who are afflicted with conditions like Spina Bifida, Multiple Sclerosis, and even AIDS.

Do you support abortion for a woman whose health is in danger?

Health is an extremely ambiguous word in the abortion debate. In *Doe v Bolton* (1973), the companion case to *Roe v Wade* (1973), the court ruled that a “health” reason constitutes any “physical emotional, psychological, familial, or age related issue.” This effectively makes any reason to procure an abortion a “health” reason and allows the killing of innocent children for reasons like “emotional distress.” We wouldn’t sacrifice a born person’s life for another person’s health so we shouldn’t tolerate this kind of act for unborn people.

Do you support abortion for a woman whose life is in danger?

Since both lives are equally valuable a doctor should do his best to save both. There is only one medical condition that would force us to advocate for the child’s death as the lesser of two evils. For example, in an ectopic pregnancy the child implants outside of the uterus, and if no action is taken, both the mother and child will die. However, removing the child which results in a death that is foreseen but not intended will save at least one life and a greater good is accomplished. Aside from this case, other medical conditions that could become life threatening like Toxemia or Placenta Previa, can be treated by a medical professional without killing the child.

A Final Note About “Hard Cases”

Challenge a pro-choice advocate by asking them if it were acceptable to allow abortion for the above hard cases but outlaw it for every other reason. According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, only 7% of abortions are performed for the previous “hard cases,” (see the Factsheet *Abortion Statistics for the United States*). This places the pro-choicer in the dilemma of agreeing with you 93% of the time or admit that they really don’t care about rape, fetal deformity, or women’s health and that they just use those issues as a smokescreen to argue for abortion on demand.