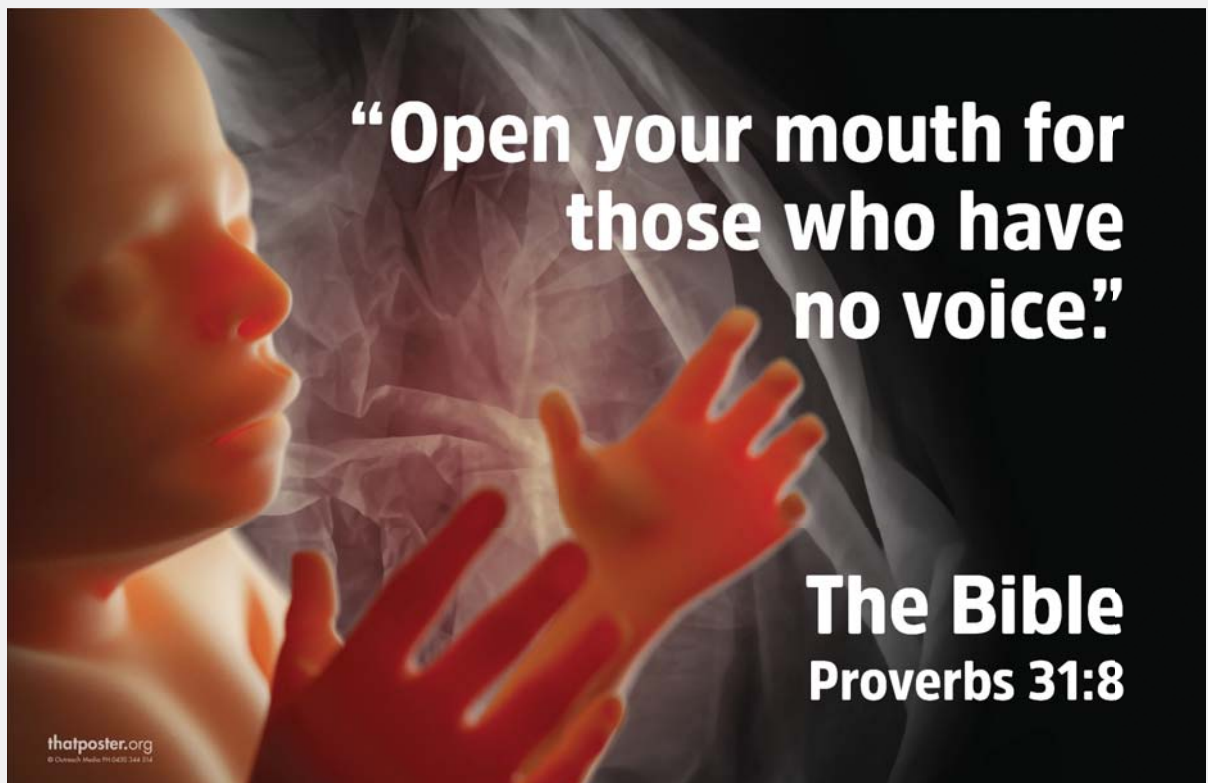


A special letter about abortion in Australia

This month, the parliament of New South Wales will vote to decriminalise abortion. If the proposed legislation is passed it will be the last state in Australia to do so.

Here are three arguments against abortion that don't require acceptance of the Christian scriptures. They may be a good starting point to show people that their presuppositions are not as firmly grounded as they may have thought. The letter finishes with a challenge for Christians to begin the conversation.



The media in Australia and other community gatekeepers treat abortion as a settled question. As a consequence, that's how most Australians view the issue. We're encouraged to think that, in the past, an important victory was won for women. And now, instead of being bullied to bear and care for children they never wanted, women have the right to make decisions about their own bodies - because, ultimately, abortion is a woman's issue.

But abortion is not and never will be a settled question.

Firstly, it is not just a women's issue. It's fundamentally a community issue. When you live in a community you belong to that community - whether you're a man, a woman or a child. So mothers aren't allowed to kill their children after they're born on the basis that they came from their body. The community would rightly punish that. And the argument that a woman has 'a right to decide what happens with her body' is scientifically flawed. At conception, a new body with its own, unique DNA is formed. Why doesn't that special, growing human have its own rights?

Secondly, abortion is dehumanising. We don't think twice about describing an unwanted pregnancy as an, 'accident' (a consequence of devaluing and 'casualising' sex). Then, to deal with the 'accident', babies that would be viable and treasured outside the womb are depersonalized with terms and phrases like 'foetus', 'products of conception (POC)', 'clump of tissue' or 'uterine debris'. When the medical community are asked (or required) to perform abortions they're placed in a terrible bind. Since ancient times doctors have pledged to 'do no harm'. Now they must harden themselves in order to dismember beautiful, growing, living, precious beings. Afterwards, countless women are left with feelings of guilt and regret. Many spend the rest of their lives asking, "What if...?"

Thirdly, abortion is at odds with Australia's egalitarian spirit and our defence of the underdog. Every day our media encourages us to feel compassion for the oppressed or those with no voice or those denied rights. Regularly, we're asked to feel sympathy for the poorly treated in nursing homes or the cause of asylum seekers, or endangered animals. Yet, our media has nothing to say in defence of the unborn human.

Instead, we're offered expedient justifications. We're told young mothers shouldn't pay a life-long price for an early mistake. But since when have 'two wrongs made a right'? And why should the child suffer for the poor choices of the parents? We're told the community must not be burdened by deformity. But who are we to say that a child with a birth defect would prefer not to live? Or, that such a life has no value? Or, that the community won't find great joy in this new life?

The statistics are staggering and so desperately sad. If data provided by *Right To Life Australia* is correct, there are in Australia, 80-90,000 abortions each year... or 250 per day... or 1 for every 2.8 live births... which translates to 1 in 3 Australian women having an abortion at some point in their life.

Unfortunately, many Australian Christians seem to have joined the settled majority. Perhaps bearing the media's stigma of 'hard right' or 'religious fanatic' is too uncomfortable? Why is it that the most vocal critic of abortion in this country is a secular organisation? (*Right To Life Australia*) What's stopping us from speaking loudly and vigorously? Is it just too easy to get on with the joy of living our own lives? After all, a foetus has no name or face.

Yes, we must be compassionate and sensitive towards women who've had abortions. But if sensitivity stops us from speaking out then, ironically, we'll never see a decrease in sad, regretful women or abortions. Meanwhile, every year, nearly an entire Melbourne Cricket ground's worth of Australians citizens are killed.

Have we Christians forgotten our heritage? In ancient Rome we spoke up against infanticide until it was outlawed. Why? ... because the Bible challenges us to speak. Here's what it says,

'Open our mouths for those who have no voice' (Proverbs 31:8).

Prayer. Dear Lord, please give me the courage to be both bold and gracious as I speak against abortion in Australia and elsewhere.

In Christ

