

A Bond Between Hearts

It all begins with two hearts and a choice. A connection between a man and a woman so strong that it intertwines their heartbeats as easily as they intertwine their hands. Their love plants a seed, a gift from God, destined to grow into a beautiful new creation of His divine will—a child born out of love. So, how can our nation, and indeed all of human history, be so blinded to the true essence of love? The pro-life movement, by advocating for the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, emphasizes the importance of nurturing both mother and child. In stark contrast, the pro-choice movement fails to protect the inherent bond between a mother and her unborn baby, leading to significant negative physical and mental health outcomes for women.

Since the beginning of the 1900s, Americans have been fiercely debating the choices that women should be allowed to make, with one of the most influential and controversial being the right to legal abortion. For decades, the pro-choice movement has claimed that legalizing abortion would positively impact women's physical and mental health, asserting that relieving the stress of pregnancy would make women happier. However, in his July 2014 article "Why Denying the Guilt Associated with Abortion Will Never Work," Randy Alcorn highlights the significant mental and physical challenges women face after undergoing an abortion. He cites numerous studies that link abortion to increased sexual dysfunction, aversion to sex, loss of intimacy, unexpected guilt, extramarital affairs, traumatic stress syndrome, personality fragmentation, grief responses, child abuse and neglect, and higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse (Alcorn, 2014). Even Serrin Foster, the president of Feminists for Life has stated numerous times that, "Abortion is the ultimate exploitation of women." (Foster, n.d.) So how can the

pro-choice movement still claim to uphold women's health if several articles and studies implicate abortion as one of the lead causes of women's recent decline in mental and physical health? Pro-choicers claim abortion will make women happier, but in fact it does the exact opposite.

Many women who seek services at Planned Parenthood and similar clinics do so under the assumption that the fetus inside them is merely a clump of cells incapable of feeling pain. However, the fetus begins developing a heart around 5-6 weeks, and by that time, an ultrasound can already detect a heartbeat. Despite this, 44.8% of medical abortions in the United States are performed around the 6-week mark, precisely when the fetus starts pumping blood through its tiny body (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). In Oregon, due to the absence of a "heartbeat bill" mandate that requires women seeking abortions to listen to the fetus's heartbeat prior to the procedure, many women remain unaware that their fetus already has a beating heart. The heartbeat bill mandate aims to humanize the fetus, fully informing the mother about what she is terminating. Hearing the heartbeat often leads women to realize that the fetus, previously dismissed as just a clump of cells, is indeed a human being. Abortion activists, however, continue to dehumanize the fetus by asserting that it cannot feel pain. Yet, scientists agree that fetuses can begin to feel pain as early as 12 weeks into pregnancy. Considering most surgical abortions in the U.S. occur within the first 12-13 weeks, it is likely that the fetus experiences pain during the procedure, although doctors often do not take precautions to address this (Anand & Hickey, 1987).

Women who seek abortions often do so out of a lack of support from their families and close friends. Their communities lack the programs that provide essential resources such as prenatal care, parenting classes, and financial assistance for women looking to keep the baby. This leads to a feeling of pressure and anxiety for the mothers and their families as they feel they can't provide for the child. Pro-choice activists claim that the services of organizations like Planned Parenthood are designed to help women out of these stressful situations. Yet studies have concluded that the long-term benefits of women who are supported during their unexpected or financially challenging pregnancies are significant, as the support contributes to the well-being of both the mother and the child, leading to healthier and more stable families (Americans United for Life, 2015).

To love both heartbeats emphasizes the intrinsic bond between mother and child from conception to natural death. From the detrimental effects of abortion on women's physical and mental health, and the early development of the fetus, to the crucial role of community support, we find we must protect both mother and child, recognizing that true love and respect for life involves nurturing and supporting both heartbeats. As we strive to understand love in its ultimate meaning, it is essential to embrace the value of every human life and work towards a future where all people are cherished and protected.