

Chapter 20

Pastor Charles had talked about how the abortion debate was closely related to the issue of sexual purity. As his text, he used Leviticus 18, showing how verse 21, “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God,” was buried in a long list of sexual purity statements.

“As always,” he said, “we have to consider what the connection is. This isn’t just a motley collection of laws. They’re related. It could be that the children were being given to be temple prostitutes, but the rest of the time ‘sacrificing your children to Molech’ is mentioned, it isn’t in the context of sexual purity, but in the context of religion.”

Charles read them some of the other passages.

“What do you think the problem may have been here in ancient Israel?” he asked.

“They were sacrificing their children to the god Molech for some kind of gain,” Kendra suggested. “I don’t think it really matters how they did it, just that they did.”

“They didn’t trust Yahweh to do what he said he’d do,” Russell nodded slowly, “so they turned to other gods who had less restrictive rules.”

“Yeah,” Sally added. “Molech and other gods like him didn’t expect them to do anything other than make sacrifices so they could be prosperous. The True God wanted them to live right too.”

“The gods back then also expected sexual promiscuity,” Tim said with a touch of surprise, “especially with the temple prostitutes.”

“So they would have good crops and blessings,” Joylynn added. “I think we’re seeing a similar situation in America today.”

“Except our gods are ourselves,” Tim nodded.

“When women get abortions, they’re thinking only about themselves and their prosperity, in some form or another,” Reylene weighed in. “They really don’t care about anyone else, certainly not about God.”

“That’s a rather simplistic statement,” Joylynn said thoughtfully. “Can we really assume that all abortions are gotten for purely selfish motives?”

“That’s no more right than assuming that all so-called pro-lifers are thinking about God when they attack abortion,” Charles nodded at Joylynn then turned to Reylene. “But I’m sure that you’re right about that being one of the primary motivations for abortion. It often wouldn’t be necessary if women applied a little wisdom beforehand and avoided getting pregnant in the first place.”

“Sexual promiscuity does go hand in hand with abortion,” Sally said thoughtfully. “When you run around having sex with just anybody, you’re living for the momentary pleasure, not the long term. You’re worshiping your own body, your own pleasure. Of course it’s not going to bother you to abort a baby.”

“Our culture teaches that we’re not supposed to be concerned about anything but ourselves,” Mac said sadly. “That’s behind both the sexual promiscuity and abortion on demand. It’s our choice, our right to do whatever feels good to us.”

“But it’s like Tim’s brother said,” Hayley grinned at her boyfriend, “you need to follow the manufacturer’s instructions or you’re going to end up buying

a new Crockpot.”

“Okay,” Charles laughed, “you’re going to have to explain this one!”

By the time the college students got done explaining Greg’s illustration for how we know we should follow God’s instructions about sex, it was obvious that the students had a good understanding of what Charles was trying to teach about their personal responsibility to live to God’s moral standards.

“Unfortunately, too often Christians are inflexible and judgmental in dealing with the abortion issue,” Charles picked up his own lesson again.

“Do you mean you think there could be a time when abortion would be something God wanted a woman to get?” Joylynn stared at Charles in shock.

“I cannot come up with any scenario where God would *want* a woman to get an abortion,” Charles said firmly. “I truly believe there is always a better option than abortion. However, I also know without a shadow of a doubt that God would never refuse to forgive someone for getting, or performing, an abortion.”

“Do you think pro-lifers actually believe that?” Tim frowned.

“Maybe not consciously,” Charles said thoughtfully, “but they *act* like they believe that sometimes. Why else would you go to desperate measures to keep a woman from getting an abortion?”

“Because babies die!” Sally snapped angrily.

“Do you feel a frantic need to contribute to the March of Dimes?” Charles asked calmly.

“No,” Sally was puzzled.

“But babies die from birth defects.”

“That’s different,” Reylene frowned.

“Why?”

“Well, we don’t have control over whether or not a baby gets a birth defect.”

“Nor do we have control over whether or not a woman gets an abortion,” Charles said calmly.

Stormy watched Charles with something close to wonder. She was beginning to suspect where this was going. Reyllynnda had been right, Charles was far from timid.

“We can make it illegal again!” Russell said hotly.

“So what if we do?” Charles stared steadily at him. “Did you know that in America the number of abortions before it was legalized was not significantly lower than after abortion was legalized?”

“That’s not true!” Tiffany snapped.

“Prove your denial,” Charles stayed calm. “I’ll show you reports that say I’m right.”

“Are you saying we shouldn’t change the laws?” Tim asked with a puzzled frown.

“I honestly believe that if we change hearts and minds, bring people to know the loving God whom we all know, they won’t find themselves in a position to even consider abortion. Isn’t that better than changing laws?”

“Changing hearts and minds certainly has eternal significance,” Stormy finally spoke up. “Does changing a law really have any eternal significance?”

Charles favored Stormy with a brilliant smile.

“But how can God bless our country if we allow abortion?” Matt asked curiously.

“Why do you think ‘our country’ is that important?” Charles asked instead of directly answering.

“Well, we’re a Christian nation,” Matt said thoughtfully. “America is God’s light to an evil world.”

“There were a number of troublesome ideas in that statement,” Charles shook his head ruefully, “but I’m only going to address the part that most closely fits our topic of the abortion issue. Why do you think ‘America’ has a corporate spiritual identity?”

“You lost me Pastor Charles,” Perry sighed.

“Think about the things we believe,” Charles explained patiently. “The laws have to be changed, why?”

“So babies won’t be killed?” Sally asked more than answered.

“That’s a stock answer,” Charles shook his head gently. “As I’ve already illustrated, that’s not really the heart of the issue. What is? Anyone want to take a stab at it?”

“We’re afraid God’s going to be mad at us,” Joylynne said thoughtfully. “If we let abortion, homosexual marriage and garbage on television keep going on, God’ll remove his hand of blessing from America.”

“What does Ezekiel eighteen have to say about that?” It took Stormy a few seconds to realize that Pastor Charles was looking right at her. He expected her to answer!

“Ezekiel eighteen?” Stormy jumped into the conversation again. “It tells us that under the new covenant, God was doing away with corporate responsibility. Under the new covenant, a son would no longer be punished for his father’s acts nor a father for his son’s. Just like we’re all personally called by God to become his child, we’re also personally responsible for our own behavior. We’re not responsible for other people’s actions.”

“You mean that it’s okay if all those babies die?” Kendra frowned fiercely.

“Of course not,” Charles almost sighed, “but we’re only responsible for our own sin, not for others’ sins.”

“I think I get it,” Tim said thoughtfully. “In the New Testament, Jesus said we were going to get a helper, the Holy Spirit living in us to turn us into new creations. If as new creations, we’re too busy fighting *against* things like abortion and homosexuality, not only are we not fighting *for* God, but we also

run the risk of driving away the lost people who God longs for.”

“I don’t ever want you to think that abortion is okay,” Charles nodded at Tim’s statement, “but I do want you to think about approaching it from a more moderate position than most people take. As Christians, it’s of primary importance that we *first* remember the love God has even for the abortion providers and the women getting abortions, not just for the babies being aborted. If we lose sight of God’s heart, we step out of God’s will.”