

Charles glanced down at Stormy and was encouraged by her smile and wink. He took a deep breath, welcomed the crowd, greeted his opponent then jumped in with both feet.

“I am neither prochoice nor prolife but I am both for choice and for life. That seems like a contradictory statement, but it really isn’t. I believe that both sides of the abortion argument are seriously flawed and yet they both have valid points. Both sides inflate their own evidence while they denigrate the

other side's arguments.

“For example, in spite of what the pro-abortion movement says, some women do suffer serious psychological effects from an abortion, but it isn't as prevalent as the anti-abortion protestors claim. Similarly, legal abortion is no longer as safe as its supporters want to believe it is, nor is it as inherently dangerous as its detractors claim. On the other hand, the pre-Roe vs. Wade deaths from illegal abortions are now known to have been greatly inflated while the current deaths from legal abortion are most likely underreported, masked on death certificates by reporting the primary cause, for example, exsanguination, bleeding to death, and not clearly stating that the secondary cause, the cause of the severe bleeding, was an abortion.

“One problem that we Americans need to face is that there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that abortion has, in many clinics, become an industry. Those clinics exist to perform abortions, not to serve women.

“Abortion providers generally fall into two categories – women's health clinics and abortionists. In a women's health clinic, the *woman* is treated. She's counseled, encouraged to really think about her decision, given choices and helped to evaluate the pros and cons of each choice. Whatever her choice, they also help her with the aftercare – prenatal care if she chooses not to terminate her pregnancy, contraceptive advice if she chooses to abort. She's offered ongoing counseling care in either case. This kind of provider is right to call themselves prochoice.

“Abortionists are not about choice. They want to get the woman in, get her money, get the abortion done and get her out the door. The shorter her time in the clinic taking up space, the more potential the clinic has to make money by shuffling other women in after her. They assume any woman who enters their doors wants an abortion. They don't counsel. In fact, they barely present the medical risks of abortion. The woman has greater risks with an abortionist than in a women's health clinic. The abortionists often do shoddy work, including leaving body parts of the fetus in the woman's uterus, perforating or otherwise damaging the uterus, not properly sterilizing their instruments, all of which can lead to infection, emergency hysterectomy, and even death. Ironically, some legal abortionists of today are more dangerous for women than many of the pre-Roe vs. Wade illegal abortion providers.

“People who are prochoice should ruthlessly root out the pretenders in their midst – expose the abortionists and shut them down. Be more concerned about women receiving *safe* abortions than about simply defending the right to legally obtain one. When an abortionist like the one in Philadelphia is exposed, if you are truly interested in women, attack him as ruthlessly as if you were on the other side of the abortion argument. If you don't, then you have exposed your true motive – keeping abortion legal *not* keeping women safe. That makes you a proabortionist, not a prochoicer.

“The other side of the argument has similar issues. Some so-called crisis pregnancy centers are purely vehicles for anti-abortion steamrolling. They don’t honestly address the crisis in the woman’s life. Instead they push the woman to accept one choice – carry to term. They run roughshod over her fears, not even allowing her to properly express them. They are all about saving the lives of unborn babies and are not at all interested in caring for women in crises. They aren’t concerned with the *woman’s* life, only with the unborn baby’s. They are anti-abortionists, not proliferers.

“However, there are many true crisis pregnancy centers, places that are as concerned about the woman as they are about the unborn baby. They will offer the woman counseling, help her to explore her options, teach her about contraception so that she doesn’t get into a similar situation again, and even help her learn other life skills that will improve her quality of life regardless of her decision. While they will not help a woman get an abortion if she decides to go that route, they will still love her and offer her help after the pregnancy is terminated.

“The prolife camp needs to be just as ruthless as the prochoice camp in finding the pretenders in their midst. Being prolife must be about more than just saving unborn babies. It must also be about helping women live their lives. Never ever can it include anger, hatred, bigotry or attacks against abortion advocates and providers. When it does so, it ceases to be prolife. It is merely anti-abortion.

“Both sides must come together and develop a reasonable alternative to abortion on demand which is neither prolife nor prochoice. As a society we must seriously reconsider abortion on demand for both logical and medical reasons. Abortion poses a very real health risk to women, especially since so much effort is going into defending the right that the safety of the procedure has taken second place.

“Abortion is not just a simple procedure like the removal of a cyst. The woman’s body is invaded by foreign objects, the fetus is removed, but usually not intact as when a baby is born. If great care isn’t exercised by the medical professional, the woman can be made seriously ill, permanently damaged or even killed. Even someone who is prochoice must realize that abortion, while a choice, isn’t the *best* choice.

“The prochoice and prolife camp must come together to provide serious and early education on the risks of sexual activity. They must find a way to begin to help young people make good life choices that don’t include risky sexual activity. If we’re truly going to be prolife or prochoice, we need to help young women make good choices before they’ve put themselves between a rock and a hard place, thus diminishing their capacity to make a good choice. An unwanted pregnancy forces a woman to choose between two bad alternatives.

“While there are a million abortions a year in America, abortion is the easiest consequence of sexual activity to avoid. There are so many ways to

avoid getting pregnant, from the serious step of a tubal ligation, to the pill or a patch, to a diaphragm and spermicide, the condom and, of course, abstinence. There are only three ways to avoid contracting a sexually transmitted disease – abstinence, the condom and sex with a virgin who has no other risk factors. The only foolproof way to avoid either pregnancy or contracting an STD is abstinence.

“A woman who is thinking with all her reasoning capacity intact will make choices that won’t even put her in the position to have unsafe sex. She will make choices that will keep her from contracting AIDS, HIV, herpes, antibiotic resistant syphilis and other less permanent STDs. She will also educate herself on the risks of abortion – scarred uterus, emergency hysterectomy, even death. If she is making informed, logical choices, she won’t risk getting pregnant unless she has already determined that she wants a baby.

“But more than a million women every year have unwanted, unplanned pregnancies and we give these women the right to make an uninformed, emotional choice that has more far-reaching effects than her first choice – the choice to have unprotected sex. The first choice lets her decide whether she will take a risk that’s not a sure thing – she may or may not get pregnant or contract an STD. The follow-on choice makes her decide whether to terminate the life of another human being. In effect, she is able to give a death sentence with nothing at all proven beyond a reasonable doubt. No woman should be burdened with that choice.

“No matter what you want to call the being produced by human sexual intercourse, she is a human baby. There is no scientific evidence that supports calling her anything else. As a fetus she may look like any number of other creatures in their early gestational phases, but there is absolutely no scientific evidence to show that any human fetus has either spontaneously or by medical manipulation been made to grow to be another species, unless maybe foreign DNA is introduced which is illegal. All the talk about when ‘human life’ begins after conception is just smoke and mirrors. It is an inescapable fact that unless the pregnancy is terminated too early, the product of a human pregnancy is always a human baby.

“In fact, not only will that baby, one-hundred percent of the time, grow to be a human child unless death stops her, but she will also always have one half of her DNA from the woman who contributed the egg and one half from the man who contributed the sperm.

“And speaking of the man who contributed the sperm, by allowing abortion on demand in defense of women’s reproductive rights, we deny men their reproductive rights. A woman can kill a man’s baby without consulting him. She can deny him one of the most powerful natural instincts – the need to reproduce. She can do that even if she had consensual sex, even if she had agreed to make a baby, even if she is married to the father. A woman can walk

into a clinic on a whim and abort a baby whether or not the father knows of his baby's existence. In the name of her reproductive rights, she can deny his.

"If we truly care about women, abortion on demand should not be allowed because it sanctions women making uninformed choices. If we as a society are going to allow abortion, it needs to at least be given equal standing with other medical procedures. If a woman wants to get her tubes tied, she can't walk into the doctor's office and get it done on the spot. The doctor will discuss the pros and cons with her, tell her the risks. He will schedule the procedure for another day. He will give her time to carefully consider her decision with an informed mind. We owe women nothing less when it comes to abortion. It isn't just a simple procedure. It is a life-altering event."

Dr. Meecham was frowning by the time Charles was finished with his opening statement. Hogue shrugged slightly when she looked at him. She cleared her throat and began reading her opening statement.

"I find it very hard to believe that in this day and age any rational human being would believe in some super-being who created the world and thus gave a 'sanctity' to human life that extends beyond the value of any other creature. Science has proven that humanity is simply the known upper echelon of evolution. There is nothing special about us, no image of some divine being.

"A woman has the right to decide what she will do with her own body. It is her body and it doesn't affect anyone else. She has the right to remove a tissue mass from her uterus just as surely as she has the right to have an abscessed tooth extracted.

"Anti-abortion activists would have us return to the days of the back alley abortionists with their coat hangers and soda bottles. They would even deny women contraceptive devices like the pill because they think they're abortifacients. They don't even want us to use condoms because the sperm and egg are living beings."

As the professor continued with her opening statement, Charles felt a growing sense of wonder. God hadn't made a mistake having Charles go first. In fact he had led Charles and Stormy to prepare an opening statement that had effectively gutted Dr. Meecham's arguments. He'd already answered virtually all of her attacks against the prolife movement, and already expressed many of her proofs for the rightness of the prochoice movement.

It quickly became obvious that the professor had approached the debate without bothering to get to know her opponent. It wouldn't have been hard for her to discover that Charles wasn't a rabid prolifer. In fact, his refusal to get involved in the legislative effort to outlaw abortion had caused him to receive some heat from Christians with a political bent.

Whenever Dr. Meecham was speaking, Charles kept his attention focused on her. Part of it was simply being polite, listening to her arguments so he could carefully consider them. Part of it was prudence. Too often he would

have laughed aloud if he'd made eye contact with Stormy or her seatmates.

Charles often made eye contact with Stormy when he spoke. Her shining eyes and bold smile assured him that no matter what anyone else thought, in Stormy's opinion, he was by far the winner of this debate.

Toward the end of the scheduled hour, the professor was obviously getting frustrated by the fact that she could find no solid ground from which to launch an attack on Charles. He'd already claimed most of the ground prochoice arguments normally stood on. Dr. Meecham finally struck with a well-used liberal slash at the prolife movement.

"So I guess you would have all of us refrain from sex unless we plan to make a baby?"

"I'm sorry ma'am," Charles frowned thoughtfully, "but I don't understand your proposal."

"Since sex is a necessary evil and contraception is a sin, we shouldn't have sex unless we want to make a baby. That's what you people preach, isn't it?" Dr. Meecham sneered.

"You people?" Charles looked at her in surprise. He looked over his left shoulder then over his right. He looked down at Stormy and shrugged. "What people? I feel awfully alone up here."

"You radical, religious right-wing Republicans."

"First off, ma'am, I am neither a Republican nor a Democrat. I have problems with both parties therefore I vote for candidates, not parties. I don't mind being called radical because I know some of my ideas aren't exactly mainstream like some of those you have expressed, but I do object to right-wing because its meaning is determined by where the person who speaks it is standing. It has no objective meaning. Finally, you better explain what you mean by religious because based on Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, I'll bet you're almost as religious as I am."

"Excuse me?"

"Yes ma'am. You seem to be very zealous about what you believe, as am I. That makes us both religious according to the dictionary. The difference is that I'm devoted to a divine being, Yahweh, better known as God, while you seem to be devoted to a set of principles rather than an intelligent being."

Dr. Meecham looked stunned. She was at a loss for how to reply to Charles. Stormy heard snickers behind her, too many to be only coming from the young people in White Stone's youth group.

"But back to your question," Charles said calmly. "No, I don't believe that sex is a necessary evil solely for procreation and that contraception is a sin. In fact, I believe that sex between a husband and wife is primarily for pleasure. Contraception is a necessary measure to keep from being overrun by children. It is the termination of life, not the prevention of conception, that I believe is a sin. I am as equally against the death penalty as I am against abortion."

“But doesn’t your God say ‘an eye for an eye?’” Dr. Meecham brought out her well-developed sneer again. “Isn’t the bible for capital punishment?”

“The Old Testament is, ma’am. You’re right about that,” Charles smiled slightly, very happy to have this opening. “However, when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave, he fulfilled the old covenant and established a new covenant. That’s why in the New Testament we find grace superseding punishment. You see, Jesus already took the punishment for all our sins. God no longer requires punishment since every sin will be covered by the blood of Jesus as soon as the person who commits it accepts Jesus as his savior. Sometimes God still allows us to suffer consequences for our sin, but we don’t have to suffer the penalty unless we choose to.”