

Students for Life of America

Wilberforce and Stevens Fellows

Pro-Life Hard Cases w/Jay Watts: Merely Human Ministries, INC.

Abortion Dialogue and Hard Cases

The art of handling hard cases well requires understanding, managing emotions, and preparation to understand the issues.

I. Understanding

- a. All ethical frameworks pertaining to human interaction have hard cases.
 - i. Edge of life ethics (beginning and end of life) raise difficult questions for everyone
 - 1. Pro-Choice Hard Cases
 - a. Sex Selection Abortions
 - b. Non-lethal disabilities, genetic selection, designer babies
 - c. Hypothetical – Would it be ok to abort a gay unborn child?

II. Managing Emotions

- a. Issues like rape, life of the mother, and severe disabilities tap into fear and pain, they are emotional subjects by nature
 - i. Empathy – Make sure you communicate you understand why this issue is difficult for our view
 - ii. Understand the demands of the inclusive view of human value

III. Prepare

- a. Rape –
 - i. Three broad justifications for abortion (when abortion advocates bother to give justifications)
 - 1. The unborn is not human (clump of cells, blob of tissue, parasite)
 - a. Hard cases are irrelevant in this view
 - 2. The unborn is human but not a person and only persons have value
 - a. Hard cases are irrelevant in this view
 - 3. The unborn is fully human but the extraordinary circumstances of rape, incest (almost always rape by a relative), life threatening maternal conditions, and severe disability justify killing them.
 - a. Rape – Rape is a grave moral evil, but we can't transfer the guilt of one person involved in a conception by rape, the rapist, to another fully valuable human life, the unborn child. Morally reflective people don't think the woman, the innocent victim and survivor of rape, is morally tainted because of what happened to her. In the same way, the unborn should not be treated as guilty either

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- b. Extraordinary circumstances, like the moral evil of rape, can remove all simply good options, so we are left with only two options: the morally impermissible, killing another human being, and the morally heroic, carrying the child to term to place in adoption or parent.

b. Life of the mother –

- i. Just like above, these are only relevant **IF** the other side concedes the full humanity and intrinsic dignity of the unborn. Otherwise, they are interesting autobiographical discussions, finding out what I think, but they don't address the views of the abortion advocate who thinks any reason is a legitimate reason to abort, not just hard cases
 - 1. Probing for your response, even when they don't believe hard cases are necessary to justify abortion, isn't probing the issue. It is probing you. It is a test of your humanity.
- ii. This time natural evil, as opposed to the moral evil of rape, has removed certain options from our considerations
 - 1. We can't fail to act; doing nothing will lead to two intrinsically valuable human lives being lost
 - 2. Double Effect Reasoning
 - a. We must preserve what life can be preserved; we intend to save a life, but the death of the other life is foreseeable though unintended.
 - i. Tubal Ectopic Pregnancy
 - 1. Removing the embryo from the pathological positioning in the fallopian tube is not an attack on the embryo. If we could remove it and place it in a nourishing protective environment we would.
 - 2. The intention of the removal is to prevent loss of life.
 - 3. The intention of every abortion is to destroy life, tubal ectopic treatment is, by definition, not an abortion.

c. Severe Disability

- i. This one personally bothers me, because it is the practice of one group of people deciding what constitutes what a life worth living is for others.
 - 1. Peter Singer and John Hudson Dilgen
 - a. John Hudson Dilgen has Epidermolysis Bullosa (missing collagen 7 from his skin so his skin sheers off easily "Butterfly Disease")

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- b. Quote from John Hudson on if his courage in the face of unimaginable unremitting pain helps others and has a greater purpose, “If this is the payment of helping other people then bring it on.”