



Sanctity of Life

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A VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH DISTINCTIVE

The *Distinctives* series articulates key biblical and theological convictions of Village Bible Church.

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POSITION STATEMENT

“In the beginning God created....” All human life is created by and from the hands of God and is therefore precious. Man and Woman are created in the image of God¹ and as a result are holy unto Him. From the moment of conception, God forms and fashions us into unique creations and He ordains our days.² As image bearers of God, Man and Woman have inherent worth. Mankind’s worth is further demonstrated by the incarnation of Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death and resurrection so that we may receive forgiveness for our sins and be reconciled to Him.³ Our bodies are described as a temple for the Holy Spirit, that is to be presented as a holy and living sacrifice.⁴ We are called to honor children as a blessing⁵, honor each other in relationships⁶, respect our elders⁷, and hold all life as sacred.⁸

Scripture lays out are some important truths:

Biblical revelation clearly and consistently affirms that human life is formed by God in His image. Therefore, all life everywhere is worthy of honor and dignity (Genesis 1:27; 9:6).

God alone is the Author of life and He alone numbers our days, from the moment of conception until natural death (Job 14:5–7; Psalm 39:4).

The Bible commands us to honor our parents and the aged (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:32; Ephesians 6:2).

The Bible affirms that “children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord” and calls us to “speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.”

At Village Bible Church, we believe that human life possesses a beautiful sanctity which is endowed by our awesome Creator-King. This belief in the sanctity of life leads us to specific stances on a number of issues, including those below.

APPLICATION POINTS

ABORTION

Village Bible Church soundly and completely believes that abortion is the murder of a defenseless child who is created in God’s image.⁹ This encompasses any intentional termination of a viable pregnancy, including the use of abortifacient drugs (i.e. “morning after pill”). This doesn’t include natural spontaneous miscarriages or nonviable pregnancies (Ectopic Pregnancy, Molar Pregnancy). To borrow from a statement of the Christian Medical and Dental Association on the moral worth of human life, “The moral worth of human beings is absolute and eternal. God has created humans in his image; therefore, human life has intrinsic moral worth.

To further borrow from this beautifully written statement:

“The beginning and continuity of the moral worth of human life are concurrent with human life itself. Human worth begins with the one-cell human embryo and lasts lifelong. A living human being is an integrated organism with the genetic endowment of the species Homo sapiens. This includes the inherent active biological disposition for ordered growth and development in a continuous and seamless maturation process. It also includes the potential to manifest such fundamental traits as rationality, self-awareness, communication, and relationship with God, other human beings, and the environment. Thus, a human being, despite the expression of different and more mature secondary characteristics, has genetic and ontological identity and continuity throughout all stages of development from formation of the human being until death. Human embryos are not “potential” human beings; rather, they are human beings with potential. Moral worth is not dependent on potential.”ⁱ

Although the culture around us would prefer to make exceptions to such a stance, any exceptions inherently place more value on one life over another, which is contrary to Scripture.¹⁰ Having said that abortion is murder of a human and thus sin, the Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ died and rose as a propitiation for all sin.¹¹ Abortion often leaves deep spiritual and emotional scars on parents’ hearts—the amazing news of the Gospel is grace and forgiveness for this as well as any other sin! As a church, we desire to care for those who are struggling with the realities of a past abortion or a current “unplanned” pregnancy by welcoming them, offering them support and counseling, and supporting ministries that offer support and alternatives like foster and adoptive care.

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

As we have noted already, ALL human life is created in the image of God and is thus sacred.¹² This includes people with severe illnesses, chromosomal aberrations, and injuries that cause the LORD’s precious children to exist with impairments to physical and cognitive functioning that are often severe. Such impairments do NOTHING to lessen the worth of these individuals in the eyes of our Heavenly Father, in fact, He uses them to glorify Himself in powerful ways unique to them.¹³ In fact, Jesus Christ was notably drawn to the crippled and sick during His time on Earth.¹⁴ At Village Bible Church, we believe that the Gospel compels us particularly to reach out to families of individuals with special needs. We would completely reject any and all cultural or governmental policy efforts that would seem to diminish the worth of these precious souls.

IN-VITRO FERTILIZATION

In-vitro fertilization is the process of joining a sperm and egg together outside of a woman’s body, then placing the fertilized egg, or zygote, in the woman’s body so that she can become pregnant. In-vitro fertilization is a controversial issue among Christians, and the Bible does not address it. Therefore, it becomes a matter of conviction from the Holy Spirit.

God values every human life; He creates and plans for every birth. The Bible says, "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. . . . You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb" (Psalm 139:13, 15, NLT). Because the fertilized egg (an embryo) is a living human, there are some moral implications to consider. Often, couples decide to harvest more eggs than they plan to use, which means that some of the embryos end up being destroyed, or frozen for later use – which usually results in destruction. The Bible does not give us permission to destroy innocent human life—this would be murder.

Those considering IVF need to reflect deeply on these matters and ask hard questions like: Exactly how many embryos will there be after IVF? Of these, how many will be implanted and how many left over and frozen? Before implantation, how many will be “de-selected” because of genetic problems (which the couple will most likely never hear about)? Of the implanted ones, how many will die naturally due to low success rates inherent in the technology (even the highest success rates to date are 40% for women under the age of 35 and these rates drop drastically after that age)? What will become of the frozen embryos? Will they be destroyed in embryonic stem-cell research or donated to a single parent or a gay or lesbian couple? Will they be simply thrown out as “bio-hazard waste?”ⁱⁱ Consider the couple that was left distraught after an in vitro fertilization clinic they used fertilized 29 of their embryos and killed seven of them... (Stoyan Zaimov, *Christian Post*, *Christian Couple Distraught*, 12/20/2018)ⁱⁱⁱ

One way to avoid this problem is to only harvest the eggs that the couple plans to implant in the womb. There is, of course, a high risk that at least some of the fertilized eggs will miscarry, but this way it would be a natural expulsion instead of purposeful destruction. This also means that the woman may have to go through additional procedures and expense to have more eggs harvested later on. Embryo adoption is also an option worth considering.

A couple should not get involved in in-vitro fertilization without prayerfully considering the will of God. Sometimes, people, not wanting to wait for God's perfect timing, get pregnant by in-vitro fertilization out of impatience. The Bible tells us that yielding to the Holy Spirit will give us patience (Galatians 5:22), and so we must be careful not to take God's work into our own hands when He may have other purposes for us. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).^{iv}

END OF LIFE CARE/EUTHANASIA

The *intentional* taking of human life is wrong.¹⁵ The Oxford Dictionary defines euthanasia as “the painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease or in an irreversible coma.” It is critically important to note the use of the word “killing.” That word implies intent to end life, which is an altogether different issue than that of a suffering patient being allowed to die painlessly, such as when pain

medications are administered to a patient with a terminal disease with the intent of easing suffering, or when, for perceived quality-of-life issues, a patient chooses to forgo life-sustaining technologies that might otherwise maintain his/her physiological functions. At Village Bible Church, we believe that physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia defy God's commandment not to murder.¹⁶ Alternatively, trusting in the Bible's promises that the LORD is sovereign over the number of our days and months¹⁷, Village Bible Church believes that the use of palliative care treatments (such as pain medications towards the end of life) and a patient and/or family's well-informed decision not to pursue certain treatments or technologies that they view as more burdensome than beneficial, are well-supported by Scripture. Such decisions are always difficult and emotionally wrenching for patients and families. The elders of Village Bible Church stand ready to attempt to offer not only comfort but Biblical counsel in these incredibly difficult situations.

*(Recommended resource: **Basic Questions on End of Life Decisions: How Do We Know What Is Right?** By Gary P. Stewart)*

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

The value of every person's life is intrinsic because we are all created in God's image¹⁸ and in His love for us, as demonstrated through the life and substitutionary atonement of His son Jesus Christ¹⁹. As the author and preserver of life²⁰, God alone has the authority to determine its length²¹ and the reasons for its lawful termination, as revealed through His supernatural revelation, the Bible. Historically the church, representing the scripture's teaching concerning the sanctity of life and the designated role of the government in the protection of it, has affirmed both the right and responsibility of that civil authority to utilize capital punishment as a means of justified retribution when lethal force has been used to take an innocent life.

The imposition of the death penalty upholds the unique value of human life, created in the image of God, while also recognizing the guilt of every perpetrator, who, even though he is a fallen human being, is still endowed with both dignity and moral agency. Since debates concerning this volatile issue often devolve into emotional rather than ethical discussions, we need God's enlightened perspective, which perfectly balances His justice and mercy. Only by embracing both can we experience His compassion and His grieving²² for both the offender and the offended and those who love them.

Because this is a topic that scripture speaks to directly, and because it is a topic that many Christians have not given much Biblical thought to, we are giving expanded explanation below.

Scriptural Principles

Capital punishment is ordained by God for all mankind when a life is maliciously taken. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made the man.²³ This command is based on the dignity of man since he is created in the image of God. Deliberately murdering a human is tantamount to

killing God in effigy. This command is universal in scope since it is directed to man as mankind before the Mosaic Law.

Capital punishment is also commanded in the Mosaic Law for the nation of Israel. If a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him from My altar that he may die.²⁴ At the same time, God's retributive justice against evil does not eliminate the possibility of mercy, even in cases where a murder has occurred. Cain, Moses, and David were all murderers, yet their lives were spared by God.

Capital punishment is assumed to be a legitimate remedy for crimes by the secular government in New Testament times. For rulers are not a terror unto good conduct, but unto bad conduct. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.²⁵

The scriptures teach that human governments are ordained by God and that the civil magistrate is a minister of God. Paul uses the emblem of the Roman sword to reinforce the concept of capital punishment. The New Testament reminds us that it is the role of government to exact justice for murder, not any individuals within society. There is no place for personal revenge within the administration of justice.²⁶ In addition, those who sit in judgment of murderers should consider mitigating factors that might warrant a sentence other than capital punishment.

Common Objections to Capital Punishment

Objection: We are no longer subject to Old Testament law, which required capital punishment for many crimes.

Response: While absolutely true, it ignores the fact that God mandated the death penalty for murder for every society before the law was established for Israel. The command that is given in [Gen 9:6](#)^L is said to be for "all future generations".²⁷

Objection: Even if the death penalty is warranted, it is cruel and unusual punishment.

Response: In reality, the death penalty has been applied in American law for 350 years (and in advanced civilizations for millennia) until the Supreme Court ruled differently in 1972. In 1976 that ruling was reversed. While capital punishment has never been "unusual" throughout history, it can be cruel, and we stand against the unnecessary infliction of pain.

Objection: In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus calls for an end to the lex talionis, the law of retaliation.²⁸

Response: Jesus did put a radical limitation on the individual right to justice. But Jesus' command only applies to individual vengeance. Jesus' "love ethic" never sets aside all requirements of civil law. Note that in quoting the Old Testament scripture, He leaves the role of the civil magistrate. "If there is an injury, then you must give life for life."²⁹

Resolutions Concerning Its Implementation

The Bible also provides directives for Christians as they work to assure the fair administration of justice in a secular culture.

Capital punishment should only be administered when the pursuit of truth and justice result in clear and overwhelming evidence of guilt.³⁰

Because of our deep reverence for human life, profound respect for the rights of individuals, and respect for the law, as a church, we will call for vigilance, justice, and equity in the criminal justice system.

Capital punishment should be applied as justly and as fairly as possible without undue delay, with the use of humane means, and without reference to the race, class, or status of the guilty party, recognizing that the death penalty can be unequally administered in our culture.³¹

As a church, we commit to love, pray for, and share the gospel with victims and perpetrators of crimes, realizing that it is only in Christ that there is forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, emotional and spiritual healing, and the gift of eternal life.

God has established capital punishment in our fallen world to help balance the scales of moral justice and has given that authority to the civil government, not the individual. While it is warranted in specific cases, it should be implemented only in cases where the evidence is certain, in accordance with the biblical requirements, applied equitably without racial or socioeconomic bias, and where no other punishment can satisfy the demands of justice. Our support of this form of punishment must always be based on respect for the sacredness of human life and its protection, the preservation of order in our society, and the attainment of justice through law. Our support of this form of punishment must always be based on respect for the sacredness of human life and its protection, the preservation of order in our society, and the attainment of justice through law.

SUICIDE

All of us have experienced discouragement in our lives, and many have endured periods of depression that can lead to bouts of hopelessness. If you feel that way as you read this, we want you to know you are not alone. You have brothers and sisters in Christ here at Village who desire to walk through this time with you. If you feel this is an imminent emergency, call 911 immediately. You are a part of a family that is ready to lift you up in prayer and surround you with the love and grace of our Savior. We also want to help you appreciate your uniqueness as you see yourself through God's eyes, the One who imagined you, breathed life into you, adopted you into His family, and promises a future for you beyond comparison.

In fact, after our salvation, life is the greatest gift any of us possesses. The value we place on both our physical and spiritual life and God's sovereignty over these has a tremendous influence on how we face difficult circumstances in life. Do we see God's love and provision for us in our fallen condition and fallen world as sufficient to meet

the challenging issues we face; or do we allow fear, anxiety, feelings of inferiority and inadequacy, anger, or guilt to overwhelm us? Yielding to the latter has caused believers to try to escape their circumstances, increasing the number of suicide attempts among Christians in our country. The scriptures never condemn those who struggle to cope with such feelings and no spiritual community is immune to the hurt caused by such a tragic choice. But what counsel does God give to those of us wrestling with a life and death decision and to the loved ones and spiritual community seeking to support us?

Biblical Truths Concerning this Choice

Even though God indwells us³², has sealed us with His Spirit, and guides us with His truth³³, every Christian is still capable of rejecting His guidance and quenching His Spirit.³⁴ But our disobedience cannot separate us from God.³⁵ No one can snatch us away from our Heavenly Father.³⁶ His promise is that every person who has the Son of God has eternal life.³⁷ Jesus Himself declared He has forgiven every sin³⁸ for the believer who has placed his trust in Him. There is only one unforgiveable sin. It is a person's continued rejection of the Holy Spirit's convicting work to embrace Jesus as their Savior.³⁹ So just as a believer is capable of taking the life of someone else, as King David took Uriah's in the Old Testament, without losing his salvation; in the same way, a person taking his own life cannot be separated from God

At the same time, while some people who commit suicide may not be rational at the time, the action itself is sin. It violates the concept of the sanctity of human life as a gift of God and usurps His authority to determine its purpose.⁴⁰ It ignores His will for us — to serve Him and His kingdom purposes.⁴¹ It refuses to believe God's promise of His providential care, to provide for us even when we may not see a solution.⁴²

Proactive Steps to Help Prevent Suicide

- If you have never received Jesus Christ as your Savior, we want to encourage you to embrace Him and His life-saving grace. He alone is the way, the truth and the life, and the answers to the issues you face.
- Every one of us needs to pursue Christ and His vision for our life. We must learn to dream His dreams for us. God wants to work through each of us and has a plan to use both our gifts and life experiences to touch others. All of us have incredible value.
- We must all recognize that we live in a fallen world and be more forgiving of ourselves and others.
- We need to be more sensitive to those who are hurting and pursue those who feel inadequate or have suffered losses. At the same time, we must never allow the enemy to make us feel that we are responsible for a friend's or family member's choices.
- We must be more alert to the "signals" or "clues" that are cries for help and endeavor to connect the person with a qualified counselor.

• Because God knows our frame, that we are but dust,⁴³ He has compassion on all who fear Him and extends His grace to us in times of need. Village Bible Church, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, is committed to coming alongside every person who is struggling and help bear his burden.⁴⁴ We desire to become the flesh and blood presence of Jehovah Rapha⁴⁵, our healing Saviour.

¹[Genesis 1:27](#); ²[Psalm 139:15-16](#); [Job 10:8-9](#), [11-12](#); [Jeremiah 1:5](#); [Isaiah 49:1](#), [5](#); ³[1 Peter 1:18-19](#); [John 3:16-17](#); ⁴[1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#); [Romans 12:1](#); ⁵[Psalm 127:3-5](#); [Proverbs 17:5-6](#); ⁶[1 Peter 3:1-7](#); ⁷[Leviticus 19:32](#); [Proverbs 23:22](#); ⁸[Exodus 20:13](#); ⁹[Genesis 1:27](#); [Exodus 20:13](#); ¹⁰[Genesis 1:26-27](#); [Galatians 3:28](#); ¹¹[1 John 1:9](#); [1 John 4:10](#); ¹²[Genesis 1:27](#); ¹³[Psalm 127:1](#); [Psalm 8:4-6](#); [Job 12:10](#); ¹⁴[Matthew 10:7-8](#); [John 9:1-11](#); [Luke 4:18](#); ¹⁵[Exodus 20:13](#); [Genesis 9:5-6](#); ¹⁶[Exodus 20:13](#); ¹⁷[Jeremiah 1:4-5](#); [Job 14:5](#); [Psalm 139:16](#); ¹⁸[Genesis 1:27](#); ¹⁹[John 3:16](#); ²⁰[Acts 17:28](#); ²¹[Job 14:5](#); ²²[Genesis 6:6](#); ²³[Genesis 9:6](#); ²⁴[Exodus 21:14](#), [20-23](#); ²⁵[Romans 13:3-4](#); ²⁶[Romans 12:19](#); ²⁷[Genesis 9:12](#); ²⁸[Matthew 5:38-39](#); ²⁹[Exodus 21:23-24](#); ³⁰[Numbers 35:30](#); ³¹[Deuteronomy 1:17](#); [Leviticus 19:15](#); ³²[Ephesians 1:13-14](#); ³³[Psalms 119:105](#); ³⁴[1 Thessalonians 5:19](#); ³⁵[Romans 8:38-39](#); ³⁶[John 10:27-29](#); ³⁷[1 John 5:11-12](#); ³⁸[Matthew 12:31](#); ³⁹[Acts 7:51](#); ⁴⁰[Job 1:21](#); [1 Corinthians 19-20](#); ⁴¹[James 4:7-10](#); [Philippians 1:21-25](#); ⁴²[Matthew 6:25-34](#); ⁴³[Psalms 103:13-14](#); ⁴⁴[Galatians 6:2](#); ⁴⁵[Exodus 15:26](#)

ⁱ <https://cmda.org/position-statements/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/kids/is-ivf-an-ethical-choice-for-pro-life-parents.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-couple-distraught-after-ivf-clinic-fertilizes-29-of-their-embryos-kills-7.html>

^{iv} <https://www.gotquestions.org/in-vitro-fertilization.html>