

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 15, What Scripture says about the Value of Human Life

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Passage: Mark 5:21-43

Big idea: If you embrace a biblical worldview you will value all human life including the Preborn, the disabled, the mentally ill, and the elderly.



We all possess, in our minds and hearts, something called a worldview. A grid of concepts, a framework of beliefs, assumptions about life, an ideology that both consciously and subconsciously guides and influences everything we do.

For some their worldview is haphazard, contradictory, circumstance dependent, and inconsistent. For others, it is clear and founded on sound thinking, grounded in supra-cultural principles and beliefs that rise above the current popular thinking of the culture.

I believe that a biblical worldview is the best worldview because it answers life's four major questions in the most compelling, coherent, and clear way.

That is one of the reasons I am a Christian and embrace a biblical worldview. The questions any worldview must coherently answer are these.

Worldview Questions:

- 1 - Origin** Where did we come from?
- 2 - Destiny** What happens after death?
- 3 - Meaning** What is the meaning of life?
- 4 - Morality** What is right and wrong?

I'm going to directly deal with a controversial topic that relates to questions 3 and 4: the value of human life, whether pre-born, old aged, or broken in some way because of physical or mental health issues.

The title of this message is: What the Scriptures Say about the Value of Human Life.

This is controversial because, in general, Canadian culture accepts, and the Canadian government endorses, abortion and medically assisted suicide. A biblical worldview stands in stark contrast to those prevailing views. Therefore, it is controversial, although I would say that most reading this embrace a biblical worldview.

However, I recognize that not everyone embraces a biblical worldview on this issue. If that is you, I only asking that you hear me out and then you can make an informed decision on your beliefs on the value of human life.

Although we live in a world that, as a whole, does not embrace a biblical worldview, I hope that you will embrace a biblical worldview on this subject. And, if you do not, that you will think about and consider what you are basing your worldview upon.

Before I get into the meat of the subject, I want to say to anyone here who may have had an abortion, encouraged an abortion, or encouraged someone to take their life through medically assisted suicide which is legal here in Canada, I want to say:

God's grace extends to all of us, no matter our prior choices. As you will see in Scripture in a bit, taking the life or encouraging the taking of an innocent life is not our prerogative. It is not our choice. It is God's choice to determine when our life here on earth is to end. So, when we usurp God's prerogatives, the Bible calls that act sin. But no sin lies beyond God's grace. God can and wants to forgive you if you have sinned in this area.

With only 30 minutes for this message, I cannot and will not answer every question this issue raises. I do, however, plan to give you a biblical world view summary and give you a simple, easy to remember acronym with points you can use in conversations with others.

BIG IDEA

If you embrace a biblical worldview you will value all human life including the pre-born, the disabled, the mentally ill, and the elderly.



Here's the direction for this message:

You will:

- Learn about current Canadian law on this issue.
- View scriptures on the value of human life.
- Understand their meaning.
- Know what you could do next to help.

Here is where the law currently stands in Canada. I consulted a lawyer, who is well versed in this. I did not make this up.

First, the abortion laws in Canada.

The abortion law in Canada is...that there is no law restricting abortion in Canada.

What that means, is that a woman can abort her baby any time during pregnancy, and the life of an unborn child can legally be taken right up to the point where that child is actually being born but has not yet fully left the mothers body or taken his or her first breath.

Some lower courts have actually ruled that a mother is excused from taking her baby's life after it is born, depending on the circumstances such as how close the ending of the life is to the time of the actual birth, the mothers mental state at the time of the birth, or surrounding circumstances present in the mother's life.

Now, when it comes to taking a human life outside of abortion, Canada passed a law several years ago that sounds very innocuous. It is called MAID. When you think of a maid, what do you think of? I think of hardworking people who do backbreaking work to clean homes and hotel rooms. The word maid is generally a positive word.

The government, however, took this positive word and made an acronym out of it to stand for Medical Assistance In Dying. In other words, MAID = government sanctioned suicide. If you are in training for a job in the medical field, you are required to receive training in MAID.

To expand on this a bit, from the government web site, a person whose death is reasonably foreseen (they are terminal soon) or not reasonably foreseen, this is new, (that is they have some physical disease that can't be cured but will not lead to imminent death, yet it is causing them to suffer), such a person can request MAID.

Stipulations include that the request must be in writing with a witness, two medical professionals must assess that some physical problem is causing suffering, and the person requesting suicide help must be notified that they can withdraw the request at any time.

Currently, the government has put a hold on the passing of a law that would allow MAID to be used in the case of 'mental illness.' In other words, a person with depression, anxiety, fear, etc. could, in the future, request government sanctioned suicide if they have that mental illness or struggle. No date has been set as to when the 'hold' will be removed, but we can expect that this will happen on short notice when the present federal government feels that the political winds make it expedient to do so.

Not only that, but there is a parliamentary committee presently studying the feasibility of allowing minors to obtain MAID with or without parental consent. Let that sink in. I am not making this up. To even consider this...I do not have words strong enough to describe my feelings of disgust on something as hideous as this. This is the current political climate in which we live.

My lawyer friend noted, "I can foresee the time when people will be able to work with doctors to have elderly relatives made subject to MAID, without the elderly person's consent, due to the subjective determination of the relative or doctor about the elderly person's failing 'quality of life' based on health and/or economic circumstances."

You may think, "Come on Charles, they won't go that far. You are really overstating this buddy. You are just playing on our emotions."

Well, when the law was updated on March 17, 2021, it stripped the 10 day waiting period that had been in the law. It also stripped the requirement for a second independent verification of a request for MAID and it stripped the requirement that a patient expressly reaffirm his or her consent to MAID immediately prior to receiving the lethal injection. All these changes made it easier for the government to help a person kill themselves.

You can see where the cultural and political winds are blowing. They are not affirming the value and dignity of human life. Rather, they are going in a different direction. The US supreme court did strike down the abortion law in that country, giving the states the option to decide. And many states are doing everything they can to keep abortion legal through 9 months. Assisted suicide has not reached the level of acceptance there as it is here.

So, what I am I trying to get at here?

Do not bury your head in the sand. The cultural and governmental climate will continue to threaten not only the unborn, the elderly, the infirm, those with mental illness, but those with disabilities as well.

I am not making this up.

That is a long and somewhat strident set up for this message.

So, let us dive into the passage we will be going through, Mark 5.21-43.

²¹ Jesus got into the boat again and went back to the other side of the lake, where a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. ²² Then a leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet, ²³ pleading fervently with him. “My little daughter is dying,” he said. “Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live.”

²⁴ Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him. ²⁵ A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. ²⁸ For she thought to herself, “If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition.

³⁰ Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my robe?”

³¹ His disciples said to him, “Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

³² But he kept on looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened to her, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. ³⁴ And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over.”

³⁵ While he was still speaking to her, messengers arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. They told him, “Your daughter is dead. There’s no use troubling the Teacher now.”

³⁶ But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid. Just have faith.”

³⁷ Then Jesus stopped the crowd and wouldn’t let anyone go with him except Peter, James, and John (the brother of James). ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw much commotion and weeping and wailing. ³⁹ He went inside and asked, “Why all this commotion and weeping? The child isn’t dead; she’s only asleep.”

This was Jesus’ way of indicating that he was going to bring her back from the dead. Since her death was not final, he spoke of it as sleep. Luke’s account clearly indicates that Jesus resurrected the girl from the dead: “Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up”, Luke 8:55. So this girl was clearly dead.

⁴⁰ The crowd laughed at him. But he made them all leave, and he took the girl’s father and mother and his three disciples into the room where the girl was lying. ⁴¹ Holding her hand, he said to her, “Talitha koum,” which means “Little girl, get up!” ⁴² And the girl, who was twelve years old, immediately stood up and walked around! They were overwhelmed and totally amazed. ⁴³ Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone what had happened, and then he told them to give her something to eat.

This passage clearly shows us that Jesus celebrates life: He ended a woman’s suffering not by taking her life, but by giving her new life by removing her suffering through healing her.

And then, instead of ignoring the death of a little girl, he raised her from the dead. This short slice of life in Jesus’ ministry speaks to his view on human life, He celebrates it. This passage also serves as springboard to what the rest of Scripture says about the subject.

In addition to the passage I just read, other scriptures teach us about the value of human life. I will give you several key passage, and briefly comment on them.

God made us in his image. Therefore, everyone has intrinsic value.

Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

This is a challenging concept to understand, being made in God's image. It does not mean that we are little gods. Rather, we are created with a likeness to God, been given dominion over God's creation, have the ability to think and feel and choose and create like no other created being. We have a built-in sense of right and wrong. We have a soul.

John Piper says that while all these are true, "images are created to image. If you create an image, if you make a sculpture of someone, you do it to display something about that someone. God created us in his image so that we would display or reflect or communicate who he is, how great he is, and what he is like".

Therefore, we have intrinsic value because of these reasons. Our value is not based on our utility or our usefulness or our benefit to the government. Neither is it based on some subjective threshold that politicians sitting in a room somewhere determine falls below an acceptable quality of lie.

Human worth does not fluctuate with the level of perceived usefulness of a person to society or the degree of suffering they are experiencing, for human worth is grounded in the image of God. A child, disabled person, or elderly person is no less the image of God than anyone else.

God made us in His image.

He created human beings as the apex of His creation.

Psalms 8:5, "You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor."

We do not have absolute autonomy over our own lives but are to be stewards of this tremendously valued life God gave us. The lives of all humans, both our own and others', are to be cherished and guarded for they are the pinnacle of His creation.

Life begins at conception.

King David writes in the Psalms, of personhood beginning while in the womb and clearly teaches that God forms a new person before birth, not during or after birth.

Psalms 139:13-16, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body."

Job writes of God giving us life.

Job 33:4, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life."

The book of Genesis tells us that life began when God shaped Adam in his own image and breathed into him the breath of life.

Genesis 2:7, "Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being."

This life is transmitted from generation to generation in an unbroken chain that links Adam and Eve with every child conceived in the mother's womb. The developing unborn baby is a human life as surely as it is a fully developed adult.

Did you know that we can detect a heartbeat of an unborn baby at 18 days after conception? And, at 40 days you can detect brain activity.

Jesus was considered a person at conception.

Matthew 1.20-21, “But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’”

And physical life continues up to the grave. Just because you are old and do not have the quality of life you had when you were younger does not diminish your worth and value to God.

Psalms 71.9, “Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone.”

Leviticus 19.32, “Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God.”

So, life begins at conception and continues up to the grave.

Jesus commands us to help relieve the suffering of others.

In Matthew 25 Jesus describes one of the crucial visible values of Christians when he says that one day there will be a winnowing out of the true believers from the false ones. An indicator of true faith is the care and concern for the least, the last, the lost, the marginalized, the poor, the sick (mentally and physically), the hungry, and the orphan. For, when we care for those suffering, Jesus likens it to caring for Him.

Matthew 25.40, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

When by our actions we value human life through caring for the suffering, we are serving Jesus.

Only God has the prerogative to give and take life.

Deuteronomy 32.39, “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life.”

Death will come to us all, but only God has the right to determine when. It is His prerogative when our life will come to an end.

I acknowledge that tragedy raises many questions... like when an innocent driver is killed, and the drunk driver who hit them doesn't get a scratch on him. We all have unanswered questions about suffering and death. I believe that even if God answered those questions, I do not think we would have the capability to understand the answers. Sometimes we simply need to trust His heart when we do not see His hand.

Only God has the prerogative to give and take life.

While we must not marginalize suffering, we must recognize that God can redeem it.

2 Corinthians 1.3-4, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”

Romans 5.3-5, “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

God is in the business of redeeming our suffering. We should never end human suffering by taking the life of the person suffering so that their suffering will end. Palliative and pain management have come a long way in helping lessen suffering.

Although suffering in itself is not good but rather a result of living in a fallen world, suffering serves redemptive purposes in our lives. Hardships of various kinds have the unique power to deepen our awareness of human frailty and mortality, disengage our affection for the things of the world, lead us to depend more on God and help us cherish more meaningfully the grace and mercy of God in Christ.

So, a biblical worldview on the value and sacredness of human life includes these components:

Biblical worldview on the sacredness of human life.

1. God made us in His image, thus we have intrinsic value.
2. He created human beings as the crown of His creation
3. Life begins at conception.
4. Jesus commands us to help relieve the suffering of others.
5. Only God has the prerogative to give and take life.
6. While must not marginalize suffering, we must recognize that God can redeem it.



So, what can we do to help? Here is a simple acronym, LIFE, that lists some next steps you could take.

Learn how you can serve “the least of these”.

Volunteer in our local London Pregnancy & Family Support Centre. Call nursing homes or senior’s day cares and learn about volunteer opportunities there. Volunteer to be on West Park’s shut-ins care team.

Learn more about mental health issues, be a good listener to those struggling, and help your friends and family get help. You can call the church because we have several Christian counselors we recommend.

Intercede and pray.

Pray for government officials to realize the value of human life at all stages and establish laws that protect the helpless and suffering. Pray for those you know that may be considering MAID or considering an abortion. God can change hearts.

Fight for those who cannot fight for themselves.

Proverbs 31.8, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.”

The slippery slope on this issue is real. Therefore, we must speak up and fight for those who cannot. We must stand up for life with our time, our money, in who we elect, in letters we send to our elected officials, and even in choices where we may one day be economically or socially penalized for a biblical worldview.

Engage in grace-filled conversations with others about the value of life.

You have learned a bit about a Christian worldview. Use these ideas in your conversations with others.

A culture that abandons babies in the womb, abandons those who are sick and mentally ill, abandons those who are old and infirm, does not have a coherent, consistent, thorough answer to suffering, meaning of life, and eternal destiny. Only Christianity has those answers. In your conversations with those far from God, do not be afraid to share your worldview, but do it with grace.

A final quote from a pastor in Singapore.

The value and dignity of human life is derived from God the Creator and is rooted in the fact that all humans have been created in God's image.

As stewards of the life God has given, we are to uphold its sanctity from conception to the grave.

Ending someone's life in order to relieve suffering or inconvenience is not only unjustifiable; it violates God's clearly defined moral order.

Suffering should bring us not to end life prematurely but to entrust ourselves more completely to our faithful God no matter what befalls us or those whom we love.

Chee-Chiew Lee