

Every Human Life Is Sacred

Genesis 1:26, Psalm 139; Exodus 21; Luke 1, 2, 18

Dr. Matt Cassidy and Mary Whitehurst --- July 11, 2021

Biblical Christianity vs. Cultural Christianity

All right. I think this is a true statement—here it goes. It is harder now than in maybe the last fifty years to be a biblical Christian, as opposed to a cultural Christian. It's been harder to do that in the last few years than in the previous fifty years.

A biblical Christian is a person who says that the Bible is the absolute authority on defining what is right and wrong, what is real, and what is true, because the Bible is from God and it speaks for God about things that are right and wrong and what is real and true.

A cultural Christian is a person that reads their Bible and they attend various church events and are actively engaged in church things, those sorts of things. But their authority is the culture itself. And they do whatever the media tells them to do or whatever the powers that be say.

And here's why it's especially difficult now. Now the algorithms have found us and they know exactly how to push us and excite our fears and our anger. And that algorithm is telling us what is right and wrong and what is real and what is true. And so, we just obey.

It's been true in the past and it's still true today: cultural Christians have either been actively involved or passively permissive in some of the worst human sins that have ever been committed. Cultural Christians were in those events. They either let it happen or they were part of it happening. And the reason they're able to do that is because a cultural Christian's mind is not conformed to the mind of God. Their minds are conformed to the mind of the culture. And in their Bible reading and in their activities within churches they're just going for validation of cultural values. And they say, "Look, I've got a Bible verse that maybe explains why I can hold that belief."

A biblical Christian tries to—as much as he or she can, with an open mind—go into the passages and say, “Whatever is clearly communicated, I’m going to do whatever I can that is the best and the most effective way of expressing this value.” That’s what a biblical Christian is.

Cultural Christianity, honestly, is scary to me. It frightens me. And the reason is because I want to ask myself, *How am I being a cultural Christian? Am I a cultural Christian? Am I just doing what everyone’s asking and telling me to do?*

When I was younger, in my thirties, I would regularly look back at church history or human history and look at those places and times, and of course I would be courageously on the side of righteousness and truth. And I would be there to intervene in the radical racism that was taking place in our country. And why not just go back a few hundred years and say I would have been there to help stop slavery in the first place. Because every human life is sacred. Every human life counts. So, I would have been there for that.

And then I think, *You know what? I would probably would have been there for child labor laws. That’s not a tool for you to use—that’s a human being! It’s a child! So stop that, because every life is sacred.*

And I probably would have been involved with the stopping of the Nazi sweep across Europe, because they were killing people that were Jewish because they felt like Jews weren’t completely human. And so, I would have been one of those people who stepped in and risked their lives and given their lives, maybe, because every life is sacred. Every human life is sacred.

It’s easy to see that. When I was in my thirties, I could see myself being that hero. And here’s the thing. Historical heroism is cheap. It doesn’t cost a thing. It’s fun to fantasize about and be romantic about what I would have done if I had been there. And one of the problems with growing old is that I’ve seen men and women who are Bible scholars and actually people of character that far surpass anything that I even hope to do, and I’ve seen those men crater to cultural values going against what the Bible teaches because it was going to affect the bottom line. *It’s going to be hard to raise money. It’s going to affect donors if we go this route.*

I think if they could do that, I could probably do that too. So, I ask myself, *Am I a pawn to cultural values? Or am I driven strictly by biblical values? Am I one of the lemmings that are in the herd, just doing whatever, or am I different?*

Here’s how you know. Here’s how you’ll know that if you lived in the past, you would have given power to the powerless or represented them. Here’s how to know that you could’ve

been a hero and given a voice to the people that couldn't speak up, that you would've defended those who couldn't defend themselves. Here's how you know you would have been that in the past. What are you doing right now, in the present, where it costs something, where there's an actual consequence for courage towards the people that have no power. Are you bringing a voice to the people that don't have a voice? Are you defending those who cannot defend themselves? Because if you're not doing it now, you wouldn't have done it back then.

I think a mark of maturity in becoming like Christ in all of life is what I would call cultural courage, the ability to just stand up to the culture and not care and pay whatever bill it takes; the willingness to just be different. Not to be different for different's sake—that's being an adolescent—it's being different because you believe that there's absolute truth; being different because it helps people who can't help themselves; being different because it's for the glory of God—you're just going to stand out. That's why.

The Sanctity of Human Life

And so, today we're going to look at a subject that gives us an opportunity to stare at something and say, *What are we going to do about this? Are we going to be a biblical Christian or a cultural Christian?* And that's the theme: the sanctity of human life.

And the subject is very easy to ignore because it's very uncomfortable to talk about. There are a lot of passages in the Bible that make me uncomfortable and I don't like where they're going, and they're going to cost me something and maybe even bring up some old things that I don't want to reconsider. But what we need today—that's why we prayed—we need courage that transcends our anxiety, maybe our guilt, maybe our fear. And let's just go into it.

We're going to look at passages today that look at the sanctity, the sacredness, the value of human life, from God's point of view. And I want to say up front that I've been looking at this and studying it for way over thirty years. And I have come to some conclusions based on various disciplines of study. And I want you to know that I might come across as someone who is absolutely sure and it might come off as self-righteous. And if it does, I hope that doesn't keep you from wanting to listen, because it's a very important subject that everyone needs to consider. If it took me thirty years, maybe it will take you that amount of time as well. I'm all for that, as long as you're on the journey facing that direction and you're seeking truth at whatever cost. And what I'm talking about here—seeking the truth—is what I consider, what my strong

conviction is, is that absolute truth comes from an outside source, the holy Yahweh God that has communicated to us in His Holy Writ that we call the Bible.

And so, I'm going to look at some passages that I tend to go towards when I think about how we evaluate the sanctity of human life, even before that person is born. So, that's what we're looking at today.

Man Is Different Than Any Other Created Being

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

When I look at the value of human life, it's easy to start in Genesis chapter 1, the foundation. Genesis 1: 26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.'" And here are the attributes of God in many respects. " 'Let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

This is a declaration that a man and a woman are different in kind, not in degree. No one has this declaration of value from God saying, *This is in our image. I'm going to give them the right of sovereignty. They are co-regents of the planet. I'll let them rule.*

And so, every human being is sacred and set apart, not like any other created thing. So, a human egg is not a human and a human sperm is not a human. But when that sperm penetrates and invades that egg, then a radical change takes place chemically and biologically. You can see that now because of the power of our microscopes. You can see that radical biological, chemical change. But I'm here to tell you that there's a radical change taking place in a spiritual context. Because at that moment is when God says, *Now I'm going to begin a relationship with a created being that's in my image. Now I'm engaging in the process of weaving that person.*

Psalm 139:13-16

**For thou didst form my inward parts;
Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb.
14 I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.
16 Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in Thy book they were all written, the days that were
ordained for me,
when as yet there was not one of them.**

And in Psalm 139—it's poetic, but I want you to listen to not just what it says, but what it means and the difference that makes. And that is that he's talking about an intimate relationship from the beginning with God, Yahweh God Almighty. Look at Psalm 139. Before a breath is taken this is the interaction we have with the Holy Spirit. "For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame is not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them."

The big mood and the message of Psalm 139 is this connection with God Almighty while we're being--the word is "woven"—chosen. We have thread colors being picked by God to make you who you are, to make me who I am. And that was an intimate relationship before we had our first breath.

The Cost of Taking a Human Life

Another way of trying to evaluate the sanctity or the sacredness of human life is to look at the cost of a human life when that life is taken. If you look at the legal system in the older Testament you can see the worth of a fetus is very similar to the worth of an adult when you see a law that decrees it so.

Exodus 21:22-25

When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine.

²³ But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Look at chapter 21 of Exodus. It says, “When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman’s husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay whatever the judges determine. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

So, before we talk about the bar fight where the woman gets hit here, look at the second section there—the life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. That’s called *lex talionis*. And I know, it sounds like a Harry Potter spell, right? Throw out a wand ... *Lex talionis!* And what it really means is it’s the law of just laws. It’s the laws of reciprocity. It’s the law of retribution. And what it means is that punishment must fit the crime. It’s an idea of equity, that no one is getting out of this thing any richer than they should. People accuse *lex talionis* of being barbaric and primitive, but in fact a lot of law is written based on this.

First of all, it’s not literal. If you hit me and knock out a tooth, I don’t get to hit you back and knock out one of your teeth. (That would be awesome!) But the idea is: What is the value of that tooth? It’s the principle of fairness. It’s against abuse. It is not abusive. Some of it, if you look at the idea of the Middle East, you steal a loaf of bread and you get your arm cut off. That’s now *lex talionis*. That’s not fair. And so, we say that the punishment fits the crime.

We use this every time we get in a fender bender. Here’s what happens: fender for fender. Bumper for bumper. Well, I had original parts, I want original parts back. Just an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. That’s that principle.

Now let’s go back to the passage. Two men are fighting, something happens, somebody bumps into a woman who is with child, she falls down and the child is born prematurely. She

didn't go into labor all by herself. So then it's like, *Okay, everybody, stop, wait, let's see what's happening. Is there any injury to the child or to the mother? Not so much. Well, okay. The guy who hit her is still going to get fined, whatever her husband wants.* And the judge says, *Okay, that's fair.*

But if there is any injury to the mother or that newborn, here we go: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, life for life. Let's go to *lex talionis* on that.

And here's why. Because the value of that mother is the same as the value of that newborn, that child that was a fetus just moments ago. They're the same. They have the same weight, the same consequence. It's bumper to bumper.

When men strive together and they hurt unintentionally a woman with child, and her children come forth but no mischief happens—that is, the woman and the children do not die—the one who hurt her shall surely be punished by a fine. But if any mischief happens, that is if the woman dies or the children die, then you shall give life for life ...”

**Umberto Cassuto
Commentary on the Book of Exodus**

Umberto Cassuto is one of the premiere scholars in Hebrew. He was a professor all around Europe, and during the second World War he ended up in Jerusalem. And he specialized in defending and translating the Pentateuch. Here's his translation of Exodus 21, just so we're clear: “When men strive together and they hurt unintentionally a woman with child, and her children come forth but no mischief happens—that is, the woman and the children do not die—the one who hurt her shall surely be punished by a fine. But if any mischief does happen, *that is of the woman dies or the children die*, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth ...”

The law of justice, *lex talionis*, says this. It says that if you take a man's life or a woman's life, it will cost you your life. If you take a life of a child, causing it to be born prematurely, it's going to cost you your life, because it's the same. It's the same cost. And do you know why? Because every human life is sacred in the eyes of God.

New Testament Greek Word *Brefos*

When you look at the newer Testament, it's a way of determining value and equity. If we look at the Book of Luke, Dr. Luke wrote this biography of Jesus. In the first few chapters he specifically is choosing words intentionally. At this church we believe that the Bible is supernaturally preserved, word for word without error, so we can learn from those details of those words. So, I'll read for you Luke chapter 1 and 2. You might know the first two chapters we read from. They're part of the Christmas story.

Luke 1:39-41a

In those days Mary arose and sent with haste into the hill country to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb.

In this section Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptist. And Mary has come to visit her—Mary the mother of Jesus. Here's what happens. "In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb."

Now, you circle the word "baby" there. That word in Greek is *brefos*. Keep that in mind. This fetus is a *brefos*. Let's continue.

Luke 1:41b-45

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of our womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

"Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the

mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, my baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believes that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

That baby that jumped for joy—circle that—that’s a *brefos*. John, before he is born, is a *brefos*. Because *brefos* means “fetus” and he can have joy.

Luke 2:12

And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Go over a chapter. This is where the angels are explaining to the shepherds where to find Jesus, a newborn child. Here’s what happens. “ ‘And this will be a sign for you,’ ” the angels are saying, “ ‘you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.’ ” There’s that word “baby.” There’s *brefos*.

But now *brefos* means “a newborn.”

Luke 2:16-17

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that and been told them concerning this child.

Let’s keep reading. “And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.” There’s “baby” again; there’s *brefos* again—newborn.

Then he goes on. “And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.” The word “child” there is a new Greek word. Circle that. That comes off as a Greek word that means “child”, that is commonly used as “child.”

The point is that the *brefos*, child now means “newborn.” Clearly, it means “newborn.”

Luke 18:15-17

Now they were bringing even infants to Him that He might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called them to Him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁷ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Now we go to Luke 18. Here’s the story. Women are bringing their children to the presence of Jesus so that Jesus could lay hands on them and bless them. That’s what is happening. “Now they”—the women, the mothers—“were bringing even infants to Him that He might touch them.”

There’s the word *brefos*. But now *brefos* isn’t a fetus; it’s not even a newborn. These are children, what we would call “toddlers.” I’ll show you how that works. “And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked the women. But Jesus called to them and said, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.’” There’s that second, that new Greek word for “children” that we saw in Luke chapter 2—not *brefos*. But this “children”—so the women weren’t coming in saying, *Put your hands on my stomach*. They weren’t coming saying, *Put your hands on my newborn*. It’s children, because they are the foundation for the kingdom of God.

Look at the next sentence. “Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter into it.” In that context, the child that He’s speaking of is what we would call a toddler today. And Jesus is saying, *You’ve got to have the heart and mindset of this toddler, this innocent, to experience and enjoy the kingdom of God*. The idea is that *brefos* here means “child” or “toddler.”

Brefos means a toddler, it means a newborn, it means a fetus. And I’d love to explain this simply, like fundamental algebra. If A equals B and B equals C, then A equals C. But I know fundamental algebra is not why you came here today and it’s not helping. So, let me make it clear this way. “For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son so that He might die and be raised again to save” these toddlers. Yeah. For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to die and be raised again so that He might save these newborns. For God so loved the

world that He sent His only Son that He might die and be raised again to save these *brefos*—fetus.

If He saved the *brefos* as a toddler and a newborn, He saved them as a fetus. That's the value. Why would God send His Son for that? Because every human life is sacred. That's why. Every human life is sacred.

Application: What Can We Do?

So, you look at these passages, and there are other passages, and they bring you into a place to ask the question, *So, what are we supposed to do?* What can we do? How do we as adults acknowledge this value from God, contrary to culture, and say, “How do we bring power?” Because we can bring power and represent the powerless. How do we bring a voice to those who don't have a voice? How do we defend those who are defenseless? That's what I want to talk about today.

I don't care if it shocks the culture, I don't care if it goes against that. Because we can't sit by, right? We can't be passively acknowledging it or actively involved in it. We have to do something about these children that are being lost. And, most of the children that are being taken are in minority status. What are we going to do, you and I?

Let's look at what we can do about the future. Let's look at how we can do something right now, in the present. And let's look at what we could do, maybe, about our past that we're not so happy about.

The Future

First, in the future. I would like for you parents to do this. Make your living room a safe place for your son or daughter to come in and sit down and have a conversation where they say, “I have an unplanned pregnancy.” You work backwards from there. You rehearse that with your husband or wife and you get ready for that possible or potential conversation so that it's an easy thing for your child to have. Make your living room so safe that they could bring a friend—one of their girlfriends or boyfriends—over to your house and say, “Mom, Dad, what should we do? They have an unplanned pregnancy and they're afraid to go home.”

You do what you need to do to practice having this revelation. And there's no shame in that. And there's no embarrassment or inconvenience. You throw those values in the cultural

garbage can and say, “How do I care for you? How do I love you through this? How do we work our way from here?”

So, I think when we talk about the future, if you’re a parent, you need to start right now so that you’re not surprised. It’s a good thing, and it’s a good thing for your children’s friends.

Present and Past: Interview with Mary Whitehurst of The Source

Now the present. What do we do about right now? Well, I can’t do this by myself, so I’ve asked Mary Whitehurst to come on up. She’s with Austin The Source. Please welcome Mary Whitehurst.

[Applause]

Matt: It’s beautiful to have you here. Austin Source, formerly Austin Life Care, was founded by a couple of members here at Grace Covenant Church, because even way back in the day over twenty-five years ago we wanted to bring life and love and comfort to people in very difficult situations. And so, we’ve been part of that ministry for so many years, and they do it so much better than we could as a church, and so let’s just keep doing that. I wanted Mary to come and tell us a little bit about what’s going on at Austin Source and how we might be able to play a part. Let’s start with the future. Let’s start with **prevention.**

Mary: Okay, great. Well, good morning, Grace Covenant. It’s so good to see everybody. It’s amazing to be back here after the crazy last eighteen months that we’ve had.

But we have always had a three-prong approach to being able to help reduce the amount of abortions that are happening in our city. We have prevention, intervention, and restoration.

With prevention, for over thirty years we have had a program called Lifeguard that we present in schools around the area. And this is a sexual risk avoidance program, the main goal being to empower students to know that they can make countercultural decisions. They can delay sexual activity. They can make healthier decisions about their sexual health.

So, we go into schools and we have this amazing interactive program that went completely digital in COVID. We have an amazing program director that kept that going. So,

even with not being able to go into the schools, we saw over 14,000 students that past school year, and we're still able to present this program.

With that being something that we've always had, wanting to get ahead and further upstream, to get to students before they're experiencing the unplanned pregnancy to empower them to make better choices.

We recognize, though, that there is also a space to be able to give proper care and education to young women through gynecological services, and also to try and build a relationship before they have an unplanned pregnancy. And so, in the midst of COVID last May we launched our clinic and we were able to start offer STI (sexually transmitted infections) testing for free as well as well-woman exams and Pap tests and also access to contraceptive care. We realize that one of the ways that we can help to reduce abortion rates is to help reduce the number of women who have unplanned pregnancies. And so, all of the care and all of the things that we're providing, the goal and the focus is to be able to do that.

Matt: Right. And strategically, some of the reasons The Source wanted to go into women's health is to establish a safe living room, a relationship with someone who says, *This is a safe living room. Before you even come in the door, we want you to know that you can trust us and we're here to care for you.*

Mary: Yes.

Matt: And since they have already decided to make some decisions that are risky sexually, that wasn't your choice, that was their choice. Why don't we start the relationship before they have an unplanned pregnancy, right?

Mary: Yeah. And we see that that's what's happening, especially with the some of the organizations in the abortion industry, establishing that relationship early so when that woman gets pregnant she'll go back to them. But they're going to be encouraging them to get an abortion, whereas we're going to be encouraging them to think about the weight of that decision. And so, in trying to build those relationships early, we're already starting to see God do some amazing things in that space.

We started doing gynecological care this spring and we had a young woman who came to us because she thought she might have an STI and wanted to get tested and treatment and wanted to get an exam. We were able to serve her. And part of creating this relationship and making sure we're the safe space that women can come back to and receive holistic care is making sure they have a great experience when they first see us. But when they are in trouble if they do find themselves with an unplanned pregnancy, we want them to come back to us.

We had a young lady very recently, last week, who had come to us last spring. Unfortunately, she had a traumatic experience going out downtown. She doesn't know what happened to her, but she woke up in an alley with all her clothes gone. She was afraid to go to the hospital, but she called The Source. *[Voice breaking slightly.]* (This did not hit me like this in the first service. Sorry.)

So, to know that the relationship and the connection she had built with our nurse practitioner months ago made this a safe space for her to come and get an exam and an STI test after probably being assaulted, and also knowing that when she comes to us, not only can we care for her physically, but we have a counselor that can talk to her. We have a spiritual coordinator who can sit and pray with her. So, we'll be able to take care of her in a much more holistic way.

Matt: Right. That's a beautiful story ... in some respects. It has redemption in it.

What about the present? What are you doing right now in the context of not necessarily prevention, but what we do currently?

Mary: So, the **intervention** piece of what we do is this. When women come to us, they call all the time looking for a pre-pregnancy test or an ultrasound because they think they may be pregnant. Almost all of them are unexpected. And some of them are in a state of crisis where they're a little bit freaked out and they're not sure what to do. A lot of women who come to us are considering abortion. So, we're giving them a safe space to have that conversation and to really weigh all of those options and really talk through all the obstacles. Because very few women that we sit down with want to have an abortion; they just feel like they don't have any other choice. So, we can help them start to see how we can remove some of those barriers. We start to give them hope that they have other options that they can choose.

So, we have the ultrasound, we have the pregnancy test, we have professional counseling, we have case management now; so we have someone who can walk with them through some of those phases. Spiritual care is huge because a lot of the women we serve have some faith background and haven't even let their minds go to that space of how this affects their faith. So, we're able to provide education and really just wrap-around care, because we want to be able to walk with her throughout whatever decision she makes. But also, we recognize that when that woman does choose life, when she decides to have that baby, getting her through the pregnancy, in a lot of regards, is the easy part. When she has the baby is when her life is going to turn upside down. And so, we walk with women from the point when they walk into the clinic to find out they're pregnant through their baby turning three years old, because we want to make sure that they have the support, whether that's a mentor or classes or diapers every month, to be equipped, to be able to be good parents.

Matt: Right. Caring for them is not a one-and-done, out-the-door thing so much. Wow!

So, you can't undo the past ... what about the people that have experienced abortion or were encouraged strongly, insisted on having an abortion, and they're living with ... I don't know ... the ruin in their lives and they're trying to put this thing down and it keeps coming back up?

Mary: So, the **restoration** part of our ministry is that we provide a safe space for women to walk through healing from past abortion, from sexual abuse, from pregnancy or infant loss. We recognize—there was a study done, I think in 2018, that said that about 40% of women who have chosen to have an abortion were part of a local church when they made that decision. That means that there are women sitting in congregations all across the country who are probably carrying a really hard secret and need to have restoration and healing.

Grace has always done an amazing job. You all have facilitators that are trained here to do those Bible studies as well. But we want to make sure we can meet women wherever they are so that they know that God still loves them and He is redeeming them, forgiving them, and can restore that brokenness.

Matt: You bet. And even today, we've arranged for two ladies to come up front after the last song, and if somebody would like to just get information or receive counseling or have someone pray for you because you're working through some past action and now you want to finally come out and say something about it, the truth will set you free. Hiding does not. Shame is powerful only when it's hidden. When it comes out to the light, it evaporates.

So, if you would like to talk to someone, someone will be available.

And also, as Mary mentioned, we have at least two ladies in our church that are already trained for some of the post-abortive counseling and Bible studies. If you'll get in touch with Melissa, our women's director, through the website, she'll set that up and get it going as soon as possible.

Mary: Yes.

Matt: So, some other things that happened during COVID ... tell us about the mobile unit you guys have up and running.

Mary: Yes. I'm sure that you all probably saw our Big Bama—that's what we call her—our big pink RV that's out front. And this was something that was about three years in the making that we were actually able to launch in May. And this is mobile clinic. So, it's an RV that's completely renovated. It has two exam rooms in it, so that we have one room we can do gynecological care and another one for ultrasounds. And it's been a journey, but a God story that has come out of that is that we launched it May 21st and we have two churches that are partnering with us and allowing us to park in their neighborhoods. Because part of the mobile clinic and the vision for it is to get where the women are.

There are a lot of women who have several different challenges and can't get to our clinic. But we can come and park in their neighborhood where they can walk up and get those services, so we're going to be more effective. And we launched on May 21st, and of course after our first day out in the community the AC when out in the middle of the Texas heat. And so, we had some mechanical work done, we've had all kinds of things that had to be rewired, and we got to get it out again this past week.

So, on Friday we were in southwest Austin and I got a text from our clinic director saying, “We have our first patient!” And that is three years in the making, to get our first woman served with an ultrasound to show her her baby for the first time on Friday.

Matt: Wow ... yay!

Mary: I’m so glad! Thank God for that. That’s been amazing!

[Applause]

Matt: By all means, it’s out in the parking lot and she brought some of her volunteers and paid staff to tell you more about it. Take a look at how it’s been re-overhauled. Anybody who has an RV knows all the stories about things breaking, so ... yeah. But it’s beautiful. It’s just this feeling of a spa and it’s a safe place, it’s a good place if you need to talk to somebody about something that’s tender. You all have made that available. That’s great.

What are some other things that happened during crazy COVID time for you guys?

Mary: Well, we were able to pivot pretty quickly. We have an amazing team and I thank God for them every single day. We only had to close the clinic for a couple of weeks just to kind of reevaluate how to see women safely. But one thing we realized very quickly is that we had to get them in for those ultrasounds. That’s such a life-changing moment, when they can actually see the baby and it the reality of what’s happening kind of sinks in.

And so, we were able to shift and do intakes over the phone and serve women virtually, then get them in to the clinic to do their ultrasound. We have survived. With God’s grace, we are now open completely. All of our staff are back in the clinic and we’re open every day for our regular operating hours. We’ve really been able to see God continue do amazing things. We have women who come in all the time. We had a woman come in last week, twelve weeks pregnant. A lot of women who come in thinking about abortion have no idea how far along they are. And so, when they sit down and have that ultrasound and they see that baby, they see that heartbeat ... The woman who came in last week—her baby put on a show. It was all over the screen. Twelve

weeks—that’s a well-formed baby. And with tears in her eyes, she said, “I can’t not have this baby.”

And so, to see women’s hearts be changed in those moments is amazing. And to see our staff who God has walked through such amazing healing in so many of the women who work with us, to be able to sit with women and say, “Hey, I had an abortion when I was your age and this is how it’s impacted my life.” Or, “I walked through some of these significant financial and medical issues that you’re facing, and this is what we’ve seen happen.” It makes a huge difference to have those conversations.

Matt: Well, I think, you know ... our church—how can we help? How can we serve you guys? How do we make The Source a better place?

Mary: Well, one, I will just say that Grace has been amazing. I have to tell you all—I’m glad I get to be able to personally tell you thank you, because when COVID hit, you were one of the first congregations to rally around us and do a big diaper drive, which was amazing, because our moms were calling us freaking out because they couldn’t find diapers anywhere. And so, you all gathered diapers—lots and lots of diapers—I can’t even remember how many boxes you all turned in. But thank you all for always being right alongside us.

There has been so much that’s happened this past year. In ministry, as I’m sure that you know, the spiritual warfare is strong and real and always there. And it’s been a tough six months for our team. We’ve gotten hit from a lot of different sides. So, we are always asking for prayer. We need to know that people are bathing The Source and our team in prayer. And know that we’re always praying for you all as well.

We’re finally in a season when we can invite volunteers back. And we’re really getting excited about being able to have more people in the clinic working directly with our moms, working directly with our dads. You men out there, we need men as well. And really being able to start to form that network of support around each of our moms so that they know they have people they can depend on.

And then, lastly, we always need support to make sure we can keep the lights on and the doors open. This ministry is really driven by the hearts of the women who work there and the

generosity of the people who come along beside us to make sure we can do this work. Grace people have always been so faithful. Thank you for that.

And so, as God leads, if you want to continue to partner with us in any of these three ways or all of these three ways, we welcome you. We thank you so much for your support.

Matt: Thank you, Mary. Let me make some things clear. One is, if you want to volunteer, go to The Source Austin—go to their website or call them—and see if there’s a possibility for you to volunteer.

In the context of giving, we’re trying to make it pretty easy for us to give in the next two or three weeks here at Grace. On our website, if you just go down one little thing, you’re going to see The Source logo. When you click on that, it’s going to send you to our giving page, and then you do the dropdown menu and hit “The Source.” And you can give—look, it’s \$1,000 already filled in—you just hit “Pay.” So there.

[Laughter]

Matt: We’re doing everything we can! So, you could go through our website—that would be great. We have envelopes in the foyer there. You can make a check out to The Source. That makes it a lot easier on our accounting staff if you do make that out to The Source.

But one of the things—you know, our average giving to The Source over the last three years has been in excess of \$65,000. I want us to ... we’ve got to get to at least \$65,000 this year, and I think we should go over \$100,000. And we’re going to do that by—well, let’s prime the pump. We’ve had a summer of giving here and we’re going to start our giving today by giving you \$50,000. We’re off!

[Applause]

Mary: Thank you for that.

Matt: If the people of Grace give \$60,000 or \$70,000 then we’re bumping it up way over \$100,000 dollars.

Mary: I can't even ... I already had my ugly cry in the first service when you surprised me with this. Thank you all so much for that overwhelming generosity. Thank you.

Matt: You bet. Do you know what I think about this issue and issues of dramatic consequence? I go back to this movie I saw when I think I was in high school. It was called *Patton* and it was the life of George S. Patton. And it opens up with this giant flag and Patton standing there. And he's motivating the troops by telling them, "Don't regret this moment." He says, "What are you going to do when the Nazis are running across western Europe? What are you going to do that you stayed home and didn't fight this battle? And you didn't give your life for this kind of freedom? What are you going to say? That you were shoveling manure in Kansas? Is that what you're going to tell them?"

When I think about this sanctity of human life, I think, *You know, someday a grandchild might come to me and Melinda and say, "What did you do? Were you a culture Christian or were you a biblical Christian? Were you just talking about things or were you passively allowing them? You didn't actively participate. What did you do?"*

I want to be able to tell them, "Yeah, it was a cultural war and they had a massive tidal wave coming at us with mostly emotions. But your grandmother and I said this: We're going to go to the Bible and find out what it says. And what it says and it's clear, we will do. We'll do whatever it says. What would Jesus do? And that's what we did. We sat down and we prayed and we said, 'What would You do, Jesus?' And we did everything He said."

That's what we want to be. We want to be a church without regret. We want to be a church that says, Yeah, I was there. And it wasn't popular and we did it anyway. We gave sacrificially, we volunteered sacrificially, we did everything and anything that God would call us to do." Why? Because in God's value system every human life is sacred. That's what we do here.

Can I pray for you, Mary?

Mary: Yes, thank you.

Matt: *[Prayer]*

Lord Jesus, we lift up Mary to you. And what a godsend she's been to The Austin Source. And I'd ask You to continue to strengthen her. Make her strong and courageous. For the staff at The Source, I'd ask that You'd surround them and protect them. Deliver them from evil and from temptation. God, I'd ask that You'd protect their marriages, that they would see spiritual war in their living rooms from the moment it happens; that they would have strong and loving, supporting families.

Lord, I'd ask for our church that we would be strong and courageous, that we would be overflowing with generosity towards any ministry that is stepping into this violation of all things that You care so much about that You would send Your Son to give His life for this, and so we'll do what we can to keep these little children alive.

So, Lord, let us be a church that makes You proud and lives a life of biblical Christianity. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.