



B R E P H O S

# ABORTION

Bible Studies





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# I N T R O D U C T I O N

Abortion is one of the most significant moral issues of our time, at the forefront of cultural and political disagreement.

Nevertheless, Christians are often unaware of the scale at which abortion occurs in the UK. It is rarer still for churches in the UK to consider in a focused way what the Bible has to say on this topic, and how the unborn child is presented throughout Scripture.

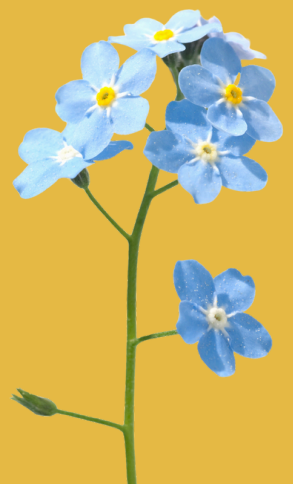
This Bible study series meets this need, with six studies, from Genesis to the Gospels, examining abortion in the light of the Scriptures. Our hope is that it provides a resource to enable Christians to respond to abortion with clarity, compassion and biblical truth.

Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible, in Anglicised form.

# STUDY I

GOD IS THE

AUTHOR OF LIFE



The opening chapters of Genesis contain foundational teaching on human nature in all its beauty, glory and tragedy. The key principle of being created in the image of God is introduced. Genesis 1-9 also includes the narratives of the Fall and Noah's Flood.



## READ GENESIS 1:26-31

*26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

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

*28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

## QUESTIONS

1. What does the creation account tell us about the uniqueness of humans when compared to the rest of creation?

2. How would you respond to the claim that only when a certain stage of development is reached do human beings qualify as being made in the image of God? What does Genesis 1:27 have to say about the value of man and woman?
3. In Genesis 3 humankind disobeys God with tragic consequences (read or summarise Genesis 3:1-7 if desired). Looking at Genesis 4:1, how is God involved in human procreation? Does God regard reproduction negatively post-Fall?

In Genesis 4 we see the negative impact of the Fall on both our relationship with God and our neighbour.



## READ GENESIS 4:8-16

8 Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" 10 And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." 13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." 15 Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. 16 Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

## QUESTIONS

4. Look again at verse 8. After the Fall, how are we sometimes tempted to regard and treat fellow human beings and bearers of God's image?
5. How does this violence come to characterise society? Look at Genesis 6:11 and 13.
6. What will be God's judgement on violence against image-bearing human life? (hint: the story occurs in Genesis 6-7)



### HOW IS GOD'S LIKENESS PASSED ON?

According to Genesis 9:6 people continue to be made in the image of God (just like Adam), a reality reaffirmed in the New Testament (James 3:9). Moreover Genesis 5:3 makes it clear that this likeness is passed on from parents (Adam and Eve) to children (Seth), through procreation.



### READ GENESIS 9:1-7

*And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. 2 The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. 3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. 4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 5 And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man."*



6 *“Whoever sheds the blood of man,  
by man shall his blood be shed,  
for God made man in his own image.*

7 *And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it.”*

## QUESTIONS

7. Look at Genesis 9:1, 7. Has God’s plan for human society changed from Genesis 1:28? God loves procreation, but hates the shedding of innocent blood. How has our society reversed this dynamic?
8. Consider Genesis 9:5-6. How does this build on the story of Cain’s violence in Genesis 4? What is God’s view of those who destroy human life? Why does God take this issue so seriously?
9. What hope is there for those who have sinned in this area? Remember that Jesus’ blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:24).



## COMPARING GENESIS WITH OTHER CREATION ACCOUNTS

Among the literature of the ancient Near East Genesis is unique in that God never resents the human ability to reproduce, but instead commands it, and views it as a blessing. The problem for Genesis is not that the world is full of people, but violence. This is in marked contrast with the Atrahasis Epic (18 th Cent. BC Akkadian), in which the gods utilise infertility, miscarriage and stillbirth to control the human population. The fear of over-population and the desire to limit global population is an ancient (and pagan) one.

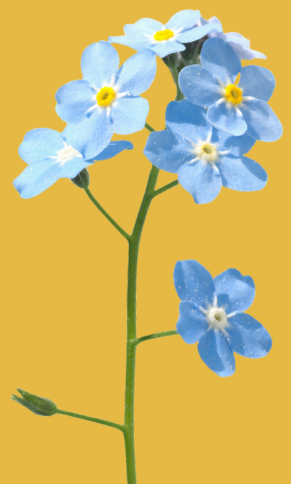
# NOTES

# STUDY 2

GOD'S

INVOLVEMENT

IN PREGNANCY



The Bible is very clear that God's involvement with human life encompasses life in the womb: the theme of this study. It is God who is responsible for conception and the gift of children (see for example Genesis 30:2; Ruth 4:13; 1 Sam 1:19-20). It is equally clear that conception, rather than birth, marks the beginning of every human life. Job, for example, rails against the night on which he was conceived (Job 3:3) and David acknowledges that he has been a sinner from the moment his mother conceived him (Psalm 51:5). God is not simply involved at the start of pregnancy, he is active throughout. Job 10 and Psalm 139 are the most sustained treatments of the formation of the unborn child in Scripture.



## READ JOB 10:8-12

- 8 *Your hands fashioned and made me,  
and now you have destroyed me altogether.*
- 9 *Remember that you have made me like clay;  
and will you return me to the dust?*
- 10 *Did you not pour me out like milk  
and curdle me like cheese?*
- 11 *You clothed me with skin and flesh,  
and knit me together with bones and sinews.*
- 12 *You have granted me life and steadfast love,  
and your care has preserved my spirit.*



## READ PSALM 139:13-16

- 13 *For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*
- 14 *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.*
- 15 *My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,*

*intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

*16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance;  
in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.*

## QUESTIONS

1. What strikes you most from these texts about God's perspective on the unborn child?
2. Compare Job 10:9 and Psalm 139:15 - poetically speaking Job is made from "clay" and David emerges from the "depths of the earth". Who else is made from the earth/dust? (Genesis 2:7). How does Adam's creation shape our view of the unborn child?
3. Look at Job 10:11 again. The combination of skin, flesh, bones and sinews occurs only here and in Ezekiel 37 - a vision of resurrection life (if you have time you could read Ezekiel 37:1-6). How does comparing embryonic human bodies with resurrection bodies help us appreciate the miracle of life in the womb?
4. In Psalm 139:13 God creates the "inward parts" of David. In Hebrew this is literally "my kidneys," which in the Old Testament convey a moral and emotional dimension, and the word can also be translated as "heart" or "mind." Why is this significant? What does it tell us about personhood?
5. Psalm 139:16 reveals that God has a plan for us from conception (in fact even before conception - Jeremiah 1:5). How would you respond to someone who says an unborn child is only a "potential" person?



## READ JOB 31:13-15

*13 "If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant,  
when they brought a complaint against me,  
14 what then shall I do when God rises up?  
When he makes enquiry, what shall I answer him?  
15 Did not he who made me in the womb make him?  
And did not one fashion us in the womb?"*

## QUESTIONS

6. What reason does Job give in v. 15 for treating his male and female servants equitably? What implications does this have for unborn children universally?
7. How would you respond to someone who argued that God is only involved in the life of the unborn child when they are significant biblical figures, such as Jacob, Job, David, Jeremiah, or Paul?
8. How does Job 31:15 root universal human rights in our shared origins in the womb? Reflecting collectively on these Scriptures from Job 10, 31 and Ps 139, can any value distinction between children in the womb and children once they have been born be maintained by those who seek to uphold the authority of Scripture?



## BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW AND MENTAL HEALTH

A lot of people struggle at some time in their lives with low self-worth, even feelings of despair. It is helpful to know that Job's description of his creation in the womb (Job 10:8-12) comes in the context of deep spiritual despondency. How might these Scriptures help those who feel they are worthless or unloved? Is there a correlation between our society's rejection of biblical teaching on the image of God and the current mental health epidemic?

Given the strong emphasis on God's sovereignty in human life from conception, is it helpful to describe any pregnancy as "unplanned," or any person as an "accident"?

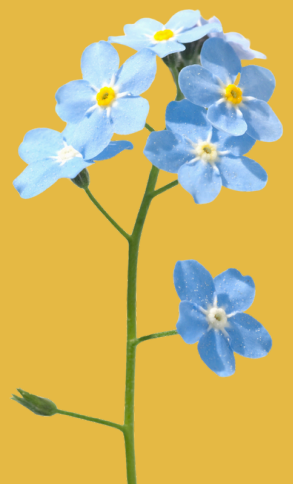
# NOTES

# STUDY 3

G O D H A T E S

C H I L D

S A C R I F I C E





The first two studies presented the Biblical teaching that human life in the image of God begins at conception, as well as exploring God's formation of, and relationship with, the child in the womb. With this foundation in place we can examine how the Old Testament regards the killing of innocent image-bearers in child sacrifice. We will examine texts from each of the three traditional divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures: Law (Leviticus), Prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel), and Writings (Psalms), to show how comprehensive this judgement is. We will also explore how child sacrifice in biblical times is paralleled by abortion today.



## READ LEVITICUS 20:1-5

*The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. 3 I myself will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name. 4 And if the people of the land do at all close their eyes to that man when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death, 5 then I will set my face against that man and against his clan and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him in whoring after Molech.*

This passage regards the false god Molech and the associated cult of child sacrifice. At times the Israelites succumbed to these horrendous pagan practices. Molech is first mentioned in Leviticus 18:21, as part of a list of prohibited behaviours, including various sexual transgressions. Adultery (Leviticus 18:20) immediately precedes child sacrifice.

## QUESTIONS

1. How does God regard child sacrifice? Is this a legitimate choice for people to make? Why do you think these laws apply for all within society, and not just the Israelites?
2. In what way is child sacrifice a crime against God as well as the innocents involved? In Ezekiel 16:20; 23:27, in a similar context, Ezekiel teaches that the children the people give birth to belong to God. How does that further impact the law here?
3. If the Scriptures consistently teach that it is wrong to kill children once they have been born, on what basis can it be right to kill children before they have been born?



### EXODUS 21:22-25

This case law regarding a pregnant woman being accidentally injured and possibly losing her child is sometimes cited to prove that the child in the womb had a lesser value than the adult mother. This is a case where Bible translation strongly influences how the passage is understood. The ESV follows the Hebrew literally in speaking of the woman's "children" and avoiding the language of miscarriage (not in the Hebrew). The scenario most likely covers a situation where the child is delivered prematurely, with penalties applying for injury (or subsequent death) in relation to both mother and child. Even if the result is a miscarriage, a penalty is still applied for this unintentional death. On no reading can this Scripture be understood as a license for the deliberate destruction of an unborn child, and therefore as a "proof-text" for abortion. No such verse exists in either the Old or New Testament. See further <https://www.brephos.org/post/bible-allow-abortion>



## READ JEREMIAH 7:30,31

30 *“For the sons of Judah have done evil in my sight, declares the LORD. They have set their detestable things in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. 31 And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind.*



## READ EZEKIEL 20:31

31 *When you present your gifts and offer up your children in fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you.*

## QUESTIONS

4. Look at Jeremiah 7:30-31. How is child sacrifice described? How is child sacrifice linked to idolatry? What idols exert a hold on people today? What sacrifices do people make for the sake of their idols today?
5. Jeremiah 7:31 states that child sacrifice never even entered God’s mind (literally “heart” in Hebrew). What does this say about how far people have departed from God’s plan for human flourishing? Is abortion best categorised as part of God’s plan for human flourishing or an expression of child sacrifice, with parents killing their own offspring to preserve their idols?
6. Ezekiel 20:31 presents a terrifying scenario where child sacrifice so defiles God’s people, that he no longer responds to their prayers. How do you feel reading this? If child sacrifice in biblical times has parallels with abortion today, in what way is the Church’s tolerance of child sacrifice, through inaction on abortion, hindering our ministry and mission?
7. The last revivals of any note in the UK (Wales: 1904-1905; Hebrides: 1949-52) occurred before the Abortion Act was passed (1967). What is the significance of this?



## IDLATRY THEN AND NOW

According to Romans 1, idolatry has not gone away, but continues to lead people into murder, deceit (Romans 1:29), and ruthless behaviour (Romans 1:31). God's wrath against such evil is real (Romans 1:18), but so is the forgiveness of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17).



### READ PSALM 106:37-40

- 37 *They sacrificed their sons  
and their daughters to the demons;*
- 38 *they poured out innocent blood,  
the blood of their sons and daughters,  
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,  
and the land was polluted with blood.*
- 39 *Thus they became unclean by their acts,  
and played the whore in their deeds.*
- 40 *Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people,  
and he abhorred his heritage*

## QUESTIONS

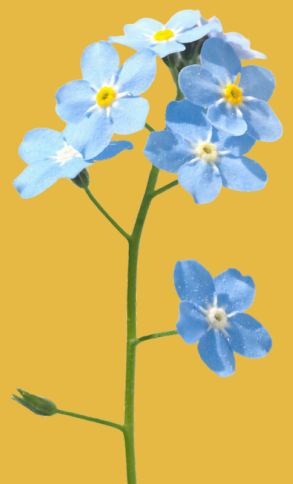
8. According to verse 37, what spiritual force lies behind the sacrifice of children? What effect does child sacrifice have on the nation and the people as a whole?
9. Look at verse 40. God "abhorring" his people is strong language indeed. Why does God regard this behaviour so seriously? (The same Hebrew root lies behind the word "abomination," which is frequently used to describe child sacrifice: Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:9-12; 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 28:3; Jeremiah 32:35).

10. Historically, a host of evil kings become involved in child sacrifice, which occurs in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (which becomes the word "Gehenna" = "hell"). God judges those kings who practice child sacrifice and Josiah destroys the shrines as part of his religious reforms (2 Kings 23:10). In what ways might God be judging our nation today because of abortion?

# NOTES

# STUDY 4

DAVID AND  
BATHSHEBA



The last study shone a light on the horror of child sacrifice as we saw the Bible's unequivocal condemnation of this pagan practice. The analogies between biblical child sacrifice and the contemporary sacrifice of children, prior to birth, in abortion was also explored. This study takes a different angle as we turn to Israel's greatest king and man after God's own heart, David. David too had his blind spots and was capable of great evil against the innocent.

*If time permits, you may wish to read the whole of 2 Samuel 11.*



## READ 2 SAMUEL 11:2-5

*2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. 3 And David sent and enquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. 5 And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."*

## QUESTIONS

1. Before Bathsheba is named she is characterised by her great beauty. For David it seems she is less a person than a desirable object he wishes to possess. How does abortion objectify and depersonalise children made in God's image?
2. The detail in verse 4 is significant as it indicates that Bathsheba has just had her period, hence any child now conceived must be David's. The Bible demonstrates the God-ordained connection between sex and children. How has our culture sought to unravel this connection? What have been the results of this?



3. Bathsheba's revelation in verse 5 changes everything for David, it is the hinge on which this narrative turns. How is Bathsheba's announcement a corrective to David's view of his "one-night stand"?

Often abortion today occurs in a context of illicit sex. Sexual sin is then compounded by abortion. Likewise for David, one sin leads to another, as his adultery results in the eventual murder of Uriah, as David seeks to cover up his transgression and Bathsheba's pregnancy. In fact, from this point onwards the body count in 2 Samuel rockets, with numerous more murders and the disintegration of David's own family. This is a low point for David: "the thing that David had done displeased the LORD" (2 Samuel 11:27). God sends the courageous prophet Nathan to confront David and expose his sin.

*If time permits, you may wish to read the whole of 2 Samuel 12:1-14.*



## READ 2 SAMUEL 12:9-14

9 *Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' 11 Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' 13 David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die."*

## QUESTIONS

4. Despite David's scheme to have others kill Uriah, God lays the blame squarely at David's feet (v. 9). How does the language around abortion work to obscure the reality of the child being killed and deflect attention away from those involved?
5. David's adultery and plan to kill Uriah took place in secret (v. 12). In what way does abortion happen in secret? How does this further enable the practice?
6. David's innocent son dies, as it were vicariously suffering for David's sins (2 Samuel 12:13-14). In what sense does abortion punish the innocent child for the sins of others? It is also possible to view David and Bathsheba's child as foreshadowing Christ, who suffers for the sins of others (Matthew 1:21) - and in a very real way we are all responsible for the death of God's son. How might this help us as we speak to those who have been involved in abortion with grace and humility?



## THE DEATH OF INFANTS

2 Samuel 12:23 gives David's reflections after the death of his week-old son: "But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." This seems more than a generic statement that all will one day die - which would have been little comfort to David. Many have seen in this verse the promise that David would one day be reunited with his baby son. David's confidence that this little one would be in God's eternal Kingdom provides scriptural foundation for the hope that God has prepared a place in heaven for all those who die at this tender stage of life, before or after birth (cf. Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 18:10). See further the moving testimony in Dan and Anna Martin, *Near to the Broken Hearted* (The Good Book Company, 2023), 133-145.

The superscription to Psalm 51 indicates that this confession of personal guilt was David's response to Nathan's confrontation, as the Spirit moved David to repentance. These words have provided comfort for those who have seriously sinned in various ways.

*If time permits, you may wish to read the whole of Psalm 51.*



## READ PSALM 51:1-6

- Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.*
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!*
- 3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.*
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgement.*
- 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.*
- 6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*

## QUESTIONS

7. David is certainly not trying to minimise his guilt in this Psalm! Why is it vital that we do not avoid or downplay speaking the truth about the reality of abortion?
8. Look at verse 5. In Psalm 139:13-16 David waxes lyrical on God's loving care for him in the womb and his knowledge of him from conception. Here David recognises that from that point he was also a sinner.

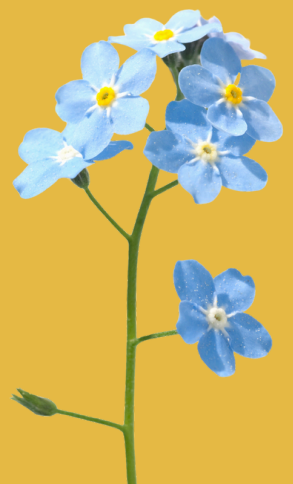
How is this good news for the unborn child? What does it reveal about personhood?

9. Psalm 51 shows that even for serious sins, including those involving “the guilt of bloodshed” (Psalm 51:14, NIV), such as abortion, there is forgiveness and freedom in Christ. How can our churches be places that balance truth about the seriousness of sin with the beauty and hope of Christ’s compassion for the sinner?

# NOTES

# STUDY 5

A DOCTOR'S  
PERSPECTIVE



In this study we transition from the Old Testament to the New. The high view of the unborn child in the Old Testament continues with the amazing descriptions of the unborn John the Baptist and Jesus. The angel Gabriel is first sent to Zechariah promising him a son who will be filled with the Holy Spirit “from the womb” (Luke 1:15). Like the Nazirite Samson (Judges 13:5, 7) John’s status and vocation begins before birth (cf. also Galatians 1:15).

After this Gabriel announces to Mary that she is going to conceive God’s Son (Luke 1:26-38). By becoming an unborn child the Lord Jesus hallows preborn life, from the point of conception. We focus on the “visitation,” which involves both the unborn John and Jesus.



## READ LUKE 1:39-45

*39 In those days Mary arose and went 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. 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 your 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 fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”*

## QUESTIONS

1. The unborn John is called a *brephos* in Luke 1:41, 44. This word is also used for the new-born Jesus in the manger (Luke 2:12, 16). What are the implications of this?

2. How does baby John's leaping in the womb express personhood and the presence of the Holy Spirit? How does his movement affect Elizabeth? What truths do you think Luke wants to express about John and Jesus through this interaction?
3. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the same word "leaped" is used for Jacob and Esau's jostling in Rebekah's womb (Genesis 25:22). What are the similarities and differences between the twins' interactions in the womb and John's witness to Jesus from the womb?
4. Elizabeth uses two descriptions for the unborn Jesus: "fruit of your womb" (v. 42) and "Lord" (v. 43). How do these two titles help us understand Jesus' human and divine nature. What is the significance of Jesus being called Lord while still within Mary's womb? Based on Mary's hasty departure in Luke 1:39, and a four or five day journey from Nazareth to Judea, approximately how old is Jesus at this stage?
5. Luke identifies Jesus' conception as the beginning of his life (Luke 1:31, 35). Although Jesus is conceived by the Spirit, from this point on his development is identical to any other person, as he is "fully human in every way" (Hebrews 2:17, NIV). What does this tell us about every other unborn child, from conception?



## THE ARK OF GOD

Some biblical scholars point to the linguistic and conceptual parallels between Mary's journey into the Judean "hill country" and the journey of the ark from a similar region back to Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 6. Luke's Infancy Narrative eventually concludes in Jerusalem, with Mary and Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:22-38). Therefore, it is possible to see Mary's womb as a sort of living ark, housing God's presence in the embryonic person of the Lord Jesus.





## READ LUKE 18:15-17

15 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."

## QUESTIONS

6. The word *brephos*, used for the unborn John and new-born Jesus, is the same word Luke uses for the "infants" brought to Christ in verse 15. How do these different episodes shape the New Testament view of children?
7. What does the disciples' reaction tell us about their need for continued reformation? As Jesus' disciples today do we still get our response to children wrong? How might this include teaching and action on abortion?
8. Flick back in Luke's Gospel to Luke 2:28, where the aged Simeon takes the infant Jesus in his arms. Whenever we welcome a child, in what sense are we also welcoming Jesus? What does it mean for us to welcome children within the womb?



## JESUS LAYING HANDS ON THE CHILDREN

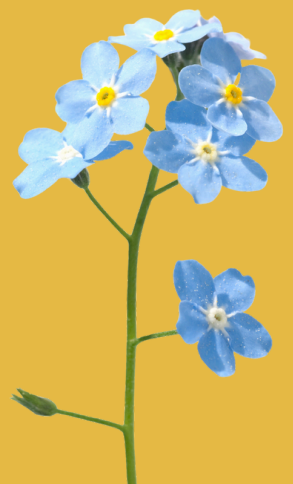
The account of Jesus blessing children also appears in Matthew and Mark. In Matthew 19:13, 15 and Mark 10:16 the verb for Jesus placing his hands on the little children is *epi-tithemi*. However, when the verb is prefixed differently it completely changes the meaning, as *ek-tithemi* is a term used in the Greco-Roman world for abandoning new-born infants outside,

who often died as a result. *Ektithemi*, meaning child exposure appears in Acts 7:21, where Stephen references the infanticide of the Hebrew baby boys in Exodus. In other words, what Jesus does for these little ones, and commends his followers to do, is the exact opposite to the contemporary practice of abandoning children like rubbish. In what ways does contemporary society continue to treat children more like waste to be disposed, than gifts to be treasured? Are we placing our hands on the unborn child for good or ill?

# NOTES

# STUDY 6

OUR RESPONSE



Once we realise what the Bible teaches about the child in the womb, and what “abortion” really is and does to that child, how should we respond? Will this remain simply an ethical position we take, or a reality that compels us to action on behalf of our unborn neighbour? The Old Testament has a number of texts that make clear how God’s people should respond to injustices against the helpless (see for example Proverbs 24:11-12; 31:8-9). In this study we look at two well-known New Testament texts, and apply them to abortion.



## READ LUKE 10:25-37

25 *And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* 26 *He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”* 27 *And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.”* 28 *And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”* 29 *But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”* 30 *Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.* 31 *Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.* 32 *So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.* 33 *But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.* 34 *He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.* 35 *And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’* 36 *Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?”* 37 *He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”*

## QUESTIONS

1. What different situations or injustices have you heard this parable applied to over the years? Have you ever heard it applied to abortion? If not, do you think this is symptomatic of the Church having a blind spot in this regard?
2. Look at verse 29. The question “who is my neighbour” lies at the heart of this parable. From the first murder in history, where Cain refuses to acknowledge the brotherly ties that bind him to Abel (Genesis 4:9), people have been finding ways to get around loving their neighbour. For those in favour of abortion, the neighbour in the womb is non-existent. How would you respond to those who argue that we have no duty of care to the unborn?
3. Is theory or practice more important in Jesus’ parable? What are the dangers of being Pro-Life in our thinking but not in our actions? Who is empowered when injustice is ignored? How are victims of abortion both dehumanised and ignored today?
4. Only one man in Jesus’ parable was a good neighbour: “the one who showed him mercy” (verse 37). Pro-abortion activists argue that they are motivated by concern for women, claiming a monopoly on compassion. What is wrong with this argument? How can we change the narrative to emphasise that both lives matter, and both lives are worthy of our compassion?



## AM I NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER?

In 1787 the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade commissioned Josiah Wedgwood to produce a seal for the movement. Henry Webber's design was the result. It swiftly became an iconic image and a lynchpin in the abolitionist's campaign against the horrors of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Even today it is recognisable and has a certain familiarity.

Yet, in its day the concept was radical. African men, women and children, were not being treated as human, still less brothers or sisters, but more like cattle, or even inanimate cargo to be bought and sold, used and abused. The text was also inspired by Scripture, namely Paul's letter to Philemon, who is urged to receive back his runaway slave Onesimus "both as a fellow man and as a brother." (Philemon 1:16, NIV).



## READ MATTHEW 25:31-46

31 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 'Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." 37 'Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?" 40 'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

41 'Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was ill and in prison and you did not look after me." 44 'They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or ill or in prison, and did not help you?" 45 'He will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." 46 'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'

## QUESTIONS

5. Explain why it is appropriate to see unborn children as included within "the least of these brothers and sisters" of Jesus. How might it be helpful to consider action on behalf of the unborn as done for Jesus himself?
6. Verses 41-46 of Jesus' teaching are difficult. Yet they make it clear that pleas of ignorance are insufficient when it comes to caring for the vulnerable. What would you say to someone who argued that Christians shouldn't get involved in Pro-Life activism? What would you say to a Christian considering abortion?
7. What practical steps could you take on behalf of the least of Jesus' brothers and sisters? How could your own congregation become actively Pro-Life?





## PHARMAKEIA

In addition to the Gospels, texts in the epistles and Revelation may be relevant. It is possible that references to *pharmakeia* in the New Testament (e.g., Galatians 5:20) include a prohibition of abortion. Typically English Bibles translate this as “sorcery” (ESV) or “witchcraft” (NIV). However the line between magic and medicine was much more blurred within the Greco-Roman world. The prohibition is probably intended to cover a range of occult practices and illicit drugs, very likely including abortifacient ones. *Pharmakeia* is often joined with adultery and murder (see Revelation 9:21; 21:8; 22:15). In the *Didache*, a text on Christian ethics (1<sup>st</sup> century or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century), *pharmakeia* is again mentioned alongside adultery and murder in a context discussing abortion (*Didache* 2:2). The reference here possibly charts a progression from drug-induced “medical” abortion (*pharmakeia*) to surgical abortion and finally infanticide.

# NOTES

We hope you have found these studies helpful. For more support in responding to abortion as a church, go to [brepheos.org](https://brepheos.org), where you can request speakers for further teaching and training and also find information about our sister ministries, Post-Abortion Support for Everyone and HOPE, working with churches to offer gospel-centred, life-affirming support to those in a difficult pregnancy situation.

## ABORTION STATISTICS

Since the 1967 Abortion Act was passed, an estimated 10 million babies have been killed by abortion in the UK.

In 2022, the latest year for which we currently have official statistics, a record-breaking 252,122 babies were killed in England and Wales.

This represents more than 1 in 4 babies, since there were only 605,479 live births that year.

In recent years, more than 98% of abortions have been under Ground C, meaning that there is no medical issue at all with mother or child; these are abortions for social reasons or “elective” abortions.

The vast majority (over 85%) of abortions are now “medical” as opposed to “surgical”, and many of these are self-administered at home under the Government’s “pills by post” scheme, introduced during Covid-19 lockdown conditions.

The percentage of women undergoing abortions who report having had at least one abortion already continues to rise: more than 40% in 2022.

