



Session 7

PROTECT HUMAN LIFE

Since God values every life He creates, we are to value and protect human life.

GENESIS 9:1-7; PSALM 8:4-8; PROVERBS 24:10-12; PHILIPPIANS 2:12-16a

Genesis 9:1 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. ² The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority. ³ Every living creature will be food for you;



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as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything. ⁴ However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it. ⁵ I will require the life of every animal and every man for your life and your blood. I will require the life of each man's brother for a man's life. ⁶ Whoever sheds man's blood, his blood will be shed by man, for God made man in His image. ⁷ But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it."

Psalm 8:4 what is man that You remember him, the son of man that You look after him? ⁵ You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You made him lord over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet: ⁷ all the sheep and oxen, as well as the animals in the wild, ⁸ the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea that pass through the currents of the seas.

Proverbs 24:10 If you do nothing in a difficult time, your strength is limited. ¹¹ Rescue those being taken off to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter. ¹² If you say, "But we didn't know about this," won't He who weighs hearts consider it? Won't He who protects your life know? Won't He repay a person according to his work?

Philippians 2:12 So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³ For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose. ¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling and arguing, ¹⁵ so that

you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world. ^{16a} Hold firmly to the message of life.

MEMORY VERSE

Philippians 2:16a

FIRST THOUGHTS

How do you determine the value of an item? Is it what the highest bidder would pay for the item on an open market? Well, in 2012 Edvard Munch's iconic pastel painting entitled "The Scream" sold at auction for nearly \$120 million! This staggering price tag led one art critic to ask, "Is that painting really worth *that* much?" Another expert cautioned readers to remember that price is what someone will pay, but value is based on deeper, innate qualities.

What are some items in your home that are of greater value to you than their price? What qualities contribute to their value to you?

Let's make our discussion of value personal: *What is the value of a human life?* We're thinking about the value of your life; of my life; of a disabled, elderly widow's life; of a Wall Street banker's life; of the life of the tiny, new human being growing in her mother's womb. Would anyone dare to say that one life is of less value than another? Sadly, some people say exactly that through their actions.

To gain a sense of life's true value, we would do well to ask the Creator, the God who made us and everything around us. We learn of His assessment and of our deep accountability to respect all human life in the Scriptures.



KEY DOCTRINE: *Value of Human Life*

Mankind is the special creation of God, made in His own image. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that Christ died on the cross for our sake. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

This study on the sanctity of human life arises out of four contexts. The first context is the Bible. As God's Word, the Bible is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. It is His instruction book concerning all aspects of life. For this reason, we draw together four Bible passages. Each one contributes to a greater understanding of the sanctity of human life.

A second context is the family. God created the family as His plan for the propagation, nurture, and growth of human beings. God assigned the family primary responsibility for helping children learn of Him and find their purpose in Him. Consequently, any culture that disregards the sanctity of human life launches, in effect, an attack on the family.

A third context is the church. The church is the Body of Christ living in the world; it is expressed in the form of countless "local churches." The Lord Jesus charged all of His followers through their churches to carry the gospel to the world, bringing its transforming message to bear on every facet of human society. In obedience to the Lord, therefore, churches are to shine the light of His truth concerning life's value into the world's darkness.

The fourth context for this study is the world. The prevalence in our world of ghastly sins such as genocide, terrorism, murder, abortion, abuse, child sex-trafficking, and a host of other sins reveals that human life is too often devalued, not valued. Too many people view human life as just a "thing." It's one more thing to be used for selfish purposes and then thrown away. This should not be!

“**A thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.**
—Jesus Christ

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PART OF OUR PURPOSE (GEN. 9:1-7)

Genesis is a book of firsts, including God’s first instructions regarding the value of human life. Its opening nine chapters tell of the universe’s beginning (1:1-25); the creation and blessing of the first human beings (1:26–2:25); the first sin and its curse (3:1-24); the first children, followed by the first murder (4:1-16); the first genealogies (4:17–5:32); the first worldwide judgment against wickedness (6:1–7:24); and the first new start given to humanity in God’s covenant with Noah. (8:1–9:29). In 9:1-7, God blessed Noah and his family after delivering them from the flood. He called them to a new commitment to their purpose in the world and to a new accountability for life.

VERSES 1-3

God reminded Noah of the great responsibility assigned to human beings from the beginning. Because we were made in God’s image (see Gen. 1:26-27), human beings had a relationship with God that no other part of creation had. With that relationship came the awesome responsibility of managing, enjoying, and protecting the creation.

God graciously spared Noah and his family from the flood. After the waters receded, they were instructed to reproduce, to spread out over the earth, and to reclaim their role as stewards of God’s world. They could now enjoy both meat and plants as food, but they were to show the utmost respect for life, especially human life.

VERSES 4-6

God prohibited Noah and his descendants from eating meat with the lifeblood still in it. The blood represented the life force that only God could give, and He required respect for life even in the butchering of an animal for food.



Respect for life extended as well (and moreso) to human life. Human life must be treated with special caution. When a person's life is violated, either by an animal or by another human being, divine accountability comes into play. As God had put the fear of humans into animal life, He now put the fear of God into human life.

In 9:6, God laid out the enforcement of our accountability for respecting the value of human life. The phrase *sheds man's blood* implies premeditated murder. The penalty for showing such a disregard for human life was proportionate to the crime. The offender forfeited his or her own life. Romans 13:1-5 further teaches that God gave human government both the authority and responsibility to bring about His justice.

The basis for such a high accountability for human life is that human beings alone bear the image of God in them. We bear His image from the moment of conception forward (see Ps. 139:13). Believers, therefore, have every reason to lead the way in building a culture that values human life. In Jesus Christ, the image of God that was marred by our sin is restored to its pristine value (see Rom. 8:29).

VERSE 7

God repeated His mandate to Noah and his family. It stressed the importance of living in obedience to our gracious, redeeming God.

If you could pass one law to help build a culture of respect for life in your community, what would it be? Explain. How do you relate the believer's call to share the gospel and the need to work for a culture that respects life?

VALUED IN HIS CREATION (PS. 8:4-8)

Psalms 8 is King David's song of praise to God for His majestic name and fame throughout the earth. While observing a vast, star-filled night sky, David reflected on humanity's remarkable place in God's creation. At the same time, the psalm peeks prophetically into the future to the coming of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. God's Son would take on human flesh and give His life on the cross, so that He might offer forgiveness and new life to sinful human beings (see Heb. 2:5-9).

VERSE 4

The majesty of creation that comes into focus under a clear night can be thrilling. It can also make us feel tiny and insignificant. It can make us ponder, as the psalm writer did, “Why does God care so much about human beings? We’re just tiny little creatures inhabiting one small planet in His vast universe. Why would the matchless, infinite, sovereign Creator of everything give any thought to our well-being?”

VERSE 5

Part of the answer to the preceding question lies in the “personal investment” God made in human beings when He created us. While we might think of ourselves or of others as insignificant, God crowned us *with glory and honor*. The phrase *little less than God* reminds us that we were made uniquely in God’s image to relate to God personally and to be like Him in character, and yet to live in the natural (physical) world as His representative.

As you consider the vastness of God’s creation, how do you respond when you consider His care for you as an individual?

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BIBLE SKILL: *Use all of Scripture to understand a major doctrine.*

God set humans apart from the rest of creation by creating them in His image. Review Genesis 1:2, Genesis 1:27, Genesis 5:1, 3; Genesis 9:6, John 4:24, Romans 1:20-25, 1 Corinthians 11:7, Ephesians 4:24, and Colossians 3:10, taking note of what each passage reveals about humanity.

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VERSES 6-8

Another part of the answer to the psalmist's question in 8:4 concerns the exalted purpose God gave human beings. God remembers us and cares for us because He gave us a great work to do. Because of our sinfulness, we often think of having dominion over creation in selfish terms. We want to be served.

By contrast, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the role God assigned to humanity. He became, in fact, our "second Adam" who through His atoning death and victorious resurrection restores in the believer both the image of God and the exalted purpose God gave mankind (see 1 Cor. 15:45-49). Given these truths, how can we do less than commit ourselves wholeheartedly to uphold the sanctity of human life?

CALLED TO ACTION (PROV. 24:10-12; PHIL. 2:12-16A)

In this section, we link together a wisdom saying from the Old Testament with an instruction from the apostle Paul about making a difference in the world as Christians. Together, these passages provide a biblical call to action concerning the sanctity of human life.

PROVERBS 24:10-12

A characteristic of biblical proverbs is that they often can be applied in various situations. For example, these verses describe *a difficult time*, but they don't specify the reason the time was so difficult. We can insert a reason from our own context. We can say, "This is *a difficult time*, because our culture increasingly devalues human life. Believers who uphold Christian ideals are often scoffed at, branded as 'haters,' and sometimes are persecuted."

God's instruction remains the same whatever the situation: "Take action to rescue those who are threatened with harm." Doing nothing indicates a lack of trust in God to give us strength. Saying that we were unaware of the threat doesn't fool God. He knows our hearts, and He is ready to help us stand faithfully on His Word.

What bold actions can believers take to uphold the sanctity of human life in today's culture?

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-16a

The believers in Philippi were some of the apostle Paul's dearest friends. They had supported him financially on numerous occasions and had ministered to him when he was imprisoned for the faith (see Phil. 4:10-16). Paul's letter to these Christian brothers and sisters contains some of the most memorable encouragement for believers in the New Testament. In these verses, Paul urged his readers to live out their faith boldly, because they were the only "lights" of God's truth shining in a *crooked and perverted generation*.

The phrase *work out your own salvation* in Philippians 2:12 doesn't mean that we work to earn our salvation. Even working to build a culture of life in your community can't save you; only God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ can save you from sin (see Eph. 2:8-9). However, Ephesians 2:10 teaches that in Christ believers have been created *for* good works. That's what Paul meant when he encouraged the Philippian believers to put their faith to work. Even more, he reminded them (and us) that God empowers believers to do His work. When we need the courage to act, when we need wisdom, and when we need assurance, God is present in believers through the Holy Spirit to give us everything we need (see Eph. 3:16).

In Philippians 2:14-16a, Paul further urged his friends not to get sidetracked by *grumbling and arguing*. Whenever a congregation has to spend time and energy sorting out internal disputes, you can believe that the Devil is making headway in the community around them. The church is called to be the light of the gospel in its context. Believers are to strive to be *blameless and pure* as they interact with the lost world around them. This instruction is especially important as believers hold forth the word of life in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is also a word of strong encouragement about upholding the sanctity of human life through both our words and our actions.

How can believers in a congregation encourage one another to put their faith to work in the area of upholding the sanctity of human life?



IN MY CONTEXT

God is our Creator; life belongs to Him, and it is His gift to us. We are therefore accountable to Him to value and protect human life. Because of salvation in Christ, believers can be living examples of life as God intended, telling others of His salvation and working for a culture that values life.

Reflect on the assignment God has given humanity for protecting life. How does your attitude toward the assignment reflect your understanding of God? Ask God to show you attitudes that need to be adjusted in your life and the steps you need to take.

What can your group do to demonstrate the value of human life? Identify steps the group can take to fulfill at least one identified action.

Identify ministries in your community that promote the sanctity of human life. How can you become involved in one of those ministries? Take a step this week to get involved in some way.

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