

The Power of Words and Answers to Pro-abortion Arguments

“She terminated her marriage last year.” Did she get a divorce? No, she killed her husband. Yes, her marriage ended as the result of her action, but did the sentence convey what actually happened? No, the words give the illusion of describing an event, but are actually distracting the listener from what actually happened.

Words are powerful, and can shape how we think. Those who work to promote abortion often deliberately use language that sounds more attractive than the reality behind it. In other cases, traditional language used innocently may contribute to confusion. The use of more accurate phraseology will contribute to greater understanding of the truth of abortion.

Terms and phrases used:

“termination of pregnancy” - Pregnancy is the time when a very young human being is developing within the mother’s womb. The normal way for a pregnancy to terminate (or end) is called birth, or delivery, when the child emerges from the womb. To refer to abortion, that is, the killing of a child within the womb, as termination of pregnancy, distracts from the main event of the action, which is the killing of the child.

More accurate term: abortion.

“pro-choice” - that sounds great; we Americans love our freedom. But what choice are we talking about? The choice of legislative representatives? The choice of a career? No, we are talking about the choice to kill a preborn child. Does anyone talk about the right to choose to steal? To print false advertising? To discipline their children with beating? No. Our laws justly limit the right of people to choose to do things that harm others. Laws may also require people to do things to protect the common good (such as carry car insurance). There is no reason we cannot, as a nation, agree that the preborn child deserves the same protection of the law against killing as those of us who are born. There is no injustice in requiring women to complete their pregnancy (which will end in a matter of months) for the sake of the welfare of the child.

More accurate term: pro-abortion.

Related terms: anti-choice: more accurate term: anti-abortion or pro-life.

“reproductive freedom” - Again, ‘freedom’ sounds good, but freedom to do what? To kill a child within the womb? To engage in sexual intercourse without accepting responsibility for the child that may be created?

More accurate phrase: freedom to kill children within the womb.

“Contents of the uterus” (used to describe what is removed by abortion)

More accurate phrase: the dead baby and supporting tissues.

“it” - often used to refer to a child within the womb, when the gender is unknown. Regardless of whether the gender is known, a human child is either male or female from the moment of conception. To refer to a child as ‘it’ contributes to thinking of him or her as an object rather than a person.

More accurate phrase: he or she

Abortion slogans and arguments used to support the legality of abortion:

“Every child a wanted child.” Doesn’t this really mean, “Kill children who are unwanted.”? The value of a child’s life does not depend on how much his or her parents desire to have a child. (Actually, many pregnancies are unwelcome when discovered, but the baby who is born is greatly loved, while babies who were much “wanted” sometimes end up being abused.) Every child is in fact wanted – by others, if not by their parents. While some would argue that most infertile couples want healthy white children, many couples will happily welcome any baby into their home.

“A woman has a right to control her body.” I do have the right to control my body, and so I can swing my fist around – but that right stops when my fist reaches your nose. The child contained within the mother’s womb is not part of her body, but a separate person from the moment of conception. (If he is male, he is male from that moment, in every cell, while his mother is female in every cell of her body.)

In the vast majority of cases, the woman freely chose to participate in sexual intercourse, inviting the possibility of pregnancy. Even in the case of rape, the fact that the mother has been victimized does not give her the right to kill the innocent child (who is her child, as well as the offspring of the rapist). Abortion does not “undo” a rape, but inflicts an additional violence on the woman as well as on her baby. Women have found that after they have healed from the rape, they still suffer from the abortion that followed.

“Abortion is a private decision between a woman and her doctor.” Is child abuse a private family decision? As above, the statement ignores the rights of the child, a separate person greatly impacted by the decision. If a woman wants a particular cosmetic surgery, but doctor knows the surgery will be harmful to her, it is his responsibility to refuse to do a harmful procedure. But doctors routinely do abortions because that is what the woman requests, rather than truly evaluating the potential harm of the surgery, to the woman as well as to the child. David Reardon, in *Making Abortions Rare* (Acorn Books, 1996), advocates holding abortionists responsible for evaluating each client for the risk of both physical and psychological harm from abortion.

“A fetus is not a person with rights.” The term fetus is simply a description of a certain phase of human development, such as infant, toddler or adolescent. It is absolutely clear that a new human life begins at conception. A toddler is not “more alive” or “more human” than an infant, or less alive or less human than an adult. Every human person begins life as a single cell and advances through several stages of maturity. To arbitrarily decide that “personhood” only applies to certain stages of development or to certain members of the human race is an arbitrary way to justify denying commonly held rights to certain groups of people. Peter Singer, a professor of bio-ethics at Princeton University, excludes from his definition of “person” not only pre-born children, but infants up to 18 months old, disabled children, and the elderly infirm.

“No one should impose their morality on others.” Isn’t that what all our laws do? We together agree that stealing is wrong and make a law against it. For many centuries it was agreed that abortion was wrong. (See information sheet “The Christian View of Abortion.”) There always have been and will continue to be those few who choose to do what the majority agree is wrong. Only when sexual morality declined and led to greater numbers of unwanted pregnancies, did a minority work to allow abortions to be performed legally. The majority went along in the belief that in very difficult circumstances such as rape, that it was a kindness to women to allow it. If someone says “I don’t want to impose my values on others,” are they really saying, “I don’t want to deal with the conflict that may arise from those who

disagree with me” or “I don’t want to make the effort to defend those who cannot speak for themselves”?

“The church should stay out of politics.” It is correct that it is not the place of the church to dictate government policy. However, the church can and must contribute to the understanding of the requirements of justice, to speak the truth and promote the values that define the common good. “A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply.” Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* §28.

“Abortions will happen anyway, and legal abortions are at least safe.” Legal abortions still present considerable risk of physical and emotional harm to women. See information sheet “Abortion Risks and Consequences.” Legality conveys a strong message of approval by society, and greatly increases the availability of abortion, thus causing a tremendous increase in the numbers of abortions performed. The safety of abortion depends much less on legality as on the availability of antibiotics and the skill and care of the doctor. Dr. Bernard Nathanson, former abortionist and advocate for legality, openly admits that the numbers quoted by abortion promoters of “thousands” of women dying from illegal abortion had no basis in fact. The inherent danger of abortion (especially as it is practiced) and the greater numbers with legality mean that legal abortion causes many more women to suffer serious physical as well as emotional harm from abortion.

“Aborting a severely handicapped child is a kindness.” This statement presumes that the life of someone suffering from a severe handicap is worse than no life at all. People with good intentions want to prevent suffering. But is the answer to suffering to kill the victim? Should infants who are born with severe handicaps be simply killed rather than cared for? What about older children or adults who are severely injured? The proper response to our brothers and sisters who are suffering is to alleviate the suffering as much as possible, but not to take their lives. Life is always a gift, and God will not give us a burden that He does not also offer the grace to carry. Human beings are tremendously adaptable. A woman born without arms eventually becomes a mother who does the dishes with her feet. Children with Down’s Syndrome are regularly proclaimed to be blessings to the family. Is it the child’s suffering we are seeking to alleviate, or the burden to the family to care for the child? Christian charity should include offering our help and support to families who include handicapped members.

“The poor need abortion.” Is the answer to poverty to kill the poor? If a poor mother needs help to continue her pregnancy and care for her children, are we helping her by giving her permission to kill her child? Can we not find better ways to help her to have her child and to provide for her children? Will government representatives argue that it costs less to pay for an abortion than to provide services for a child who is born into poverty?