

I. Introduction

We are taking a break from our series on Mark to observe Sanctify of Life Sunday. In 1984, President Reagan established January 22 as Sanctity of Life Sunday because that was the date the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Roe v. Wade*, legalized abortion in 1973. For over 20 years, HCC has also honored Sanctity of Life Sunday due to our belief that all people, the mother and the unborn, are made in God's image and thus deserving of respect, love, and support. I know the topic of abortion can generate a lot of strong feelings, controversy, and spirited debate. But, I hope you will stay with me as I tackle abortion through the angle of God caring for both the baby and mother. My prayer is that my message this morning brings more light than heat, healing than pain, and clarity than confusion.

In 2022, in a 6-3 ruling, the Supreme Court in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overruled *Roe* and *Casey*, concluding: "The Constitution does not prohibit the citizens of each State from regulating or prohibiting abortion." **Since abortion is now up to the States, need for dialogue and persuasion is greater than ever.** Justice Alito opened up his opinion with this sentence: "Abortion presents a profound moral issue on which Americans hold sharply conflicting views." Of course we all know that.

But, abortion is divisive not just in society but also in the church. You can have two Christians on opposite sides of this issue each quote Dt. 30:19, which reads: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live." The pro-life Christian says, "You see, the Bible says to choose *life*!" And the pro-choice believer says in response, "That's right, it's 'choose life'! There's a choice that needs to be preserved."

So **why preach on this topic?** Why risk ruffling feathers or rocking the boat? Well, let's first take stock of what is going on now. The current narratives we often hear are: To be "pro-life" is to be anti-woman, and to be pro-choice is to be anti-life. Both are simplistic, false narratives and need to be called out as such. Yet, abortion continues to polarize society along these two fault lines (pro-life and pro-choice). They have caused quakes and tremors throughout the nation, splitting society, separating us from one another, and wreaking destruction in its wake in terms of physical life, our ability to communicate, and our bearing the image of God. It has left the hearts of many wondering, "Is there any way forward in unity?"

So, again, why preach on sanctity of life? Why speak on abortion? Why risk alienating or offending people, or being criticized for being too political or narrow-minded? I still think I can and should speak on it. First and foremost, although I may not fully understand all that is going on when it comes to having an abortion (especially as a man), God does, and I believe I can help you understand what he says through his word this morning. Second, although the woman is obviously greatly affected by the pregnancy and abortion (if she chooses to get one), the man and any other related children are also affected. Lastly, abortion is a challenging topic, so I want to help equip you on how to think through and respond to it.

Although abortion is not a gospel issue (you don't need to support a given abortion position to be saved or be a Christian), it **touches on very important theological and heart matters**, including people being made in the image of God. It is a complex ethical dilemma concerning life and death. If we do not talk about it in the church, then it's likely you will go to other sources, voices, or people outside the church to inform

and form your views on it. I would much rather that the word of God establish your convictions and then from there, you engage others about this in charitable, humble, and persuasive ways.

So, I preach on sanctity of life because unlike the world narrative that has led to devastation, death, and division, the **Bible tells a better story**. *When faithfully lived out*, biblical values lead to true goodness and life for the mother and her unborn baby. I admit, Exodus 21:22-25 is not a go-to passage in the debate surrounding abortion. Scriptural arguments against abortion need not, and should not, be based on this text alone. But it does talk about the sanctity of life for the unborn and his mother. Through it, **we see God's heart for both people and his unwavering affirmation of life**.

II. Context and Relevancy of Exodus 21:22-25

Let's first put Exodus 21:22-25 in its **context within the book of Exodus**. After the Ten Plagues, Israel leaves Egypt, crosses the Red Sea, and then at Mount Sinai, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. It is there that God establishes his covenant with Israel.

Exodus 21-23 constitute what you can say is Israel's "case law." In the American court system, judges rely on prior cases as precedence, guidance, and authority to make decisions on the controversies before them. Typically, they extract principles from these prior cases and expound and apply binding and relevant law. Chapters 21 to 23 are case law that expounds the Ten Commandments. In them, God gives his laws, statutes, and ordinances to govern how his newly freed people were to live so they could be God's witness among the pagan nations as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:5-6).

But that begs the question, "Why should we even study this passage that apparently relates to the civil laws of theocratic ancient Israel?" "**How can this be relevant to 21st century democratic America?**" To briefly answer this question requires a slight tangent on how the Old Testament laws relate to the New Testament. Some of you may have heard a three-fold division of the Law into civil, ceremonial, and moral, with only the moral law remaining in force, whereas the ceremonial and civil laws having been abolished. But, while this division may be a helpful study aid, we need to remember that *all* of the Law is a single entity, all of it is moral in nature, and all Law is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).

Furthermore, *all* of the law "is still significant as revelation, prophecy, and wisdom when mediated through Christ (Matt 5:17-19)." "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom 10:4). So, we can say "no" to theonomy (or Christian Nationalism) that still believes the civil law, unmediated through Christ, ought to govern society. But, we can also say "no" to classic covenant theology which says the civil law is not applicable because it only applied when theocratic Israel existed.

Exodus 21 to 23 has relevance to us not in a literal application of its statutes, but in the *principles that underlie them* and transcend place and culture. These chapters set forth paradigms or illustrations of principles of how God's law ought to be applied in Israel's society. By extension then, they also apply to any society that seeks to honor God. They still apply to *our society* because they give guidance on how we are to be holy within a covenant relationship with God. So, we should still read and study passages like our text this morning.

III. Truth: God Cares for Both the Mother and Her Unborn Baby (Exposition of Exodus 21:22-25)

And this passage is perhaps the single most discussed Bible passage in the abortion debate.¹ Let's read it once again:

"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. 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."

Both sides of the debate have used this passage to bolster their position. **Translations vary widely**, with some expressly mentioning a miscarriage (e.g., RSV) and others stating a premature birth (e.g., NIV, NASB, CSB).² The ESV that we use is more literal in translation and avoids both phrases. But as we will see, the translations fall along the backbones of the two main interpretations of this passage, which I will call the “miscarriage view” and the “premature birth view.”

Let me first **summarize these two views** so you know where most people land on this text.

1. Pro-Choice (Miscarriage View): The pro-abortion movement believes a miscarriage results from the injury incurred in verse 22; the offender should thus pay a fine to compensate for the loss of the fetus; and only if the *woman herself* suffers serious, permanent injury or death does the lex talionis (the law of retribution in verses 23 to 25) apply. So, they argue, the fetus is not considered a person, and thus not fully human. As one proponent put it, “The woman has full standing as a person under the covenant, the fetus has only a relative standing, certainly inferior to that of the woman.”³

2. Pro-Life (Premature Birth View): Contra to the “miscarriage view”, anti-abortion advocates see the woman giving birth prematurely due to being struck. If there is no injury sustained by the woman or her baby, then the courts shall fine the man who injured the woman. But if either the woman or the baby is injured or killed, lex talionis will be enforced.

I believe the premature birth view is a more faithful reading of this passage. And it leads to the truth that **God cares for both the unborn baby and mother because both are people made in God's image**. I believe this for four reasons.

1. Based on Context: First, look at the context of Exodus 21:22-25. It falls within laws grouped together on the basis of causing permanent injury or death to someone. They are directly related to the sixth commandment as they all center upon the value of human life and importance of protecting it. The *imago Dei* is what sanctifies human life and makes it valuable.

2. Based on Hebrew Words Used: Second, in verse 22, there are three Hebrew words that when properly understood, affirm the worth and personhood of baby and mother. I know I'll get a little technical

¹ <https://humanjourney.org.uk/articles/exodus-21-and-abortion/>

² See, for instance, Ron Du Preez and his study of various English translations:
<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1992/09/the-fetus-in-biblical-law>

³ Paul D. Simmons, *Birth and Death: Bioethical Decision-making, Biblical Perspectives on Current Issues Series*, ed. Howard Clark Kee (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), p. 84.

here, but please stick with me as it's imperative we see what the original language means, not any sort of translation gloss.

i. *Yeled* ("child")

The first word to consider is "children," which in Hebrew is *yeladim*. Its singular form, *yeled*, refers to a living human being the vast majority of the times it is used in the Old Testament.⁴ And see how the word "children" is used. Not "product of conception" or some term of impersonal property. There were actually other Hebrew terms that were used to denote a product of a miscarriage or a stillborn child (*nephel* or *golem*).

For instance, when Job was lamenting his birth due to all the suffering he experienced, he said "[W]hy was I not as a hidden stillborn child (*nephel*), as infants who never see the light?" (3:6; see also Ps 58:8; Eccl 6:3). Even one scholar who argues for the miscarriage view wrote that use of *yeled* instead of *golem* or *nephel* supported the notion "that the fetus is...a human being, a child, a **fetus with personhood**."⁵

I know other Christians have argued otherwise and they might appeal to other ancient Near Eastern legal codes (like the Code of Hammurabi) that treat the fetus as an object, not a person. But, although those codes can give some cultural context for Exodus, they differ quite significantly from the Bible in nature, purpose, and emphasis.

In God's eyes, each baby in the womb is already an individual, no matter where in the developmental process the baby happens to be. Science also tells us unequivocally that the **pre-born child is a complete and a unique living human being**. At every stage of development from zygote to adult, the human individual remains the same self-integrating human organism, which, given a hospitable environment, develops itself.⁶

So, the use of *yeled* is an argument that the fetus is a person. It indicates that what is in the mother's womb, her unborn baby, is a living person.

ii. *Yatsa* ("come out")

Second, going on in verse 22, we see that the pregnant woman is struck and her children "come out." The verb "come out" is the Hebrew word *yatsa*. In over the thousand uses of this word in the Hebrew Bible, it is never translated "miscarriage." To the contrary, *yatsa* is ordinarily used to describe **normal human births**.⁷

⁴ What we see in verse 22 is "children," which of course is the plural of "child." While it is a bit unusual to see the plural form here, this was probably intended to be a generic plural to show that same rules apply regardless of how many children the woman is carrying.

⁵ Fuller, 179; See also Stephanie Gray, "Is an Embryo a Person?": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlTUevPlWPg>

⁶ For instance, Marta Shahbazi indicated "critical remodeling events at this stage of human development are embryo-autonomous, highlighting the remarkable and unanticipated self-organizing properties of human embryos."

<https://www.nature.com/articles/ncb3347>

⁷ See Gen 25:26; 38:28-30; Job 3:11; 10:18; Jer 1:5; 20:18. Also, "whenever *yatsa* refers to a stillbirth, it is always accompanied by some form of *muth* (to die), as in Numbers 12:12 and Job 3:11. Because *yatsa* appears without any

And, just as there was a specific Hebrew word for a “stillborn child” versus a “living child,” there is a specific Hebrew word, *shakol*, Moses could have used to denote “miscarriage,” if he had intended this concept. He uses *shakol* just a couple chapters later in Ex 23:26).⁸ So, he was clearly aware of this term but did not use it here. Rather, Moses’ use *yatsa*, which describes the normal, live birth of a child lends support to the view that he has a premature birth of a person in mind in verse 22.

iii. *Ason (“harm”)*

Finally, the third word we need to examine is *ason*, which is translated as “harm.” Who exactly is being harmed? Those who hold to the miscarriage view typically think harm refers only to the woman. The premature birth view typically holds the harm as only applying to the baby. But, I, along with many others, actually think a more accurate understanding is that *harm refers to both the mother and child*.

Nothing in the text suggests a limitation of “harm” to just the woman. The Hebrew expression *lah* (to her), which would restrict the harm to the woman as opposed to the child, is absent in the text. Without this preposition, a natural reading of the passage would suggest that “harm” refers to the harm stemming from a woman giving birth prematurely. Thus, “no harm” or “harm” applies to either the child or the mother.

Therefore, the Mosaic Law, requires the same punishment for injury done to either person. Both are made in the image of God, both lives are held equally precious, and crimes against both are treated just as severely.

3. Based on Use of Fines (v22): Look at the rest of verse 22, the issue of fines appears, which is a third reason why this text supports God’s care for the baby and mother. **Fines demonstrate culpability** in a way that brought restoration and justice to society. For instance, in the verses right before our passage, verses 18 and 19, if two men fight, and one is injured so badly that he cannot work, then the one who caused the injury shall pay a fine for the other man’s loss of work (21:19).

In verse 22, if there is no harm to either the baby or his mother, then a fine is still assessed to highlight the moral culpability of the man who struck the mother. It also represents reimbursement for the expense of an untimely birth of the baby, and punitive damages for the serious trauma to the mother, baby, or both. So, the fine applies to either or both people because they are valuable in God’s eyes.

4. Based on the Principle of *Lex Talionis* (vv23-25)

Finally, in verses 23 to 25, we move on from the scenario of no harm to contemplate what happens if there is harm. In these verses is the first biblical reference to the famous “law of retaliation,” or in Latin,

form of *muth* in Exodus 21:22, we must conclude that the passage indicates a live birth.”

<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1992/09/the-fetus-in-biblical-law>

⁸ “None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days”; see also Gen 31:38, Ex 23:26, Hos 9:14, Job 21:10.

lex talionis. *Lex talionis* is the fourth reason for why this text shows God's loving care of the mother and her unborn.

To many, *lex talionis* can seem primitive and barbaric. If a person gouged another's eye out, was the punishment really going to be gouging out the first person's eye? No. *Lex talionis* was not to be applied in a literalistic manner.⁹ The dramatic listing of eight pairings was paradigmatic and meant to highlight the principle that the **punishment must fit the crime**. The only thing which specifically corresponds in this list is the first item, "life for life," which is underscored in 21:12-17, a section on capital punishment.

But the other seven pairings illustrate how *lex talionis* intended to equalize the playing field and protect the weak against the strong and wealthy. Unlike other laws in Moses' time, which provided fines as a way to satisfy justice, the principle in verses 23-25 indicate God's desire for true justice. The goal of *lex talionis* was to see full justice done and fair and equitable results rendered.

Again, the principle is that the punishment must fit the crime. Yet, what God is saying here is that the right and fitting punishment for the perpetrator if a mother or her unborn baby is killed, is for him to forfeit his life because he killed a person made in God's image. And what's even more amazing is that while most unintentional crimes (like manslaughter) can open a city of refuge for the criminal to flee to (cf Ex 21:13), the **death penalty is required for the unintentional or accidental death of the unborn baby or his mother**. God cares that deeply about both people.

IV. Implications: Since God Cares for Both Baby and Mother...

So, what does this ancient text have to say to us today? What are the implications for us and the abortion debate flowing from this passage? Since we've seen that special protection is afforded to a pregnant woman and her unborn child, as they are both made in God's image, I offer two simple implications or principles: first, the unborn are people to be loved, and second, mothers are people to be loved.

a. Unborn Are People to be Loved

First, the unborn are *people* who bear the *imago Dei* and are to be loved and protected. Basic to this passage is the assumption that the baby delivered prematurely has the same rights and protections under the law as an adult human being. That is, the fetus is a person.

Since the fetus is a person, we also then need to **cherish the unborn as a gift, even when unwanted or difficult**. We cherish them by building a culture within church and society that affirms life in all aspects. We advocate for the unborn who have a right to live. Their lives should be protected and affirmed. We should lament the death of the unborn through abortion.

As Caitlin Flanagan movingly wrote in the *Atlantic*: "What I can't face about abortion is the reality of it: that *these are human beings*, the most vulnerable among us, and we have no care for them. How terrible to

⁹ "An example of the non-literalistic application of talion law follows immediately in vv. 26–27, in which the case of a servant's master damaging the eye or tooth of a servant required the loss of the servant's labor, not the gouging out of the master's eye or tooth." Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 494.

know that in the space of an hour, a baby could be alive—his heart beating, his kidneys creating the urine that becomes the amniotic fluid of his safe home—and then be dead, his heart stopped, his body soon to be discarded.”¹⁰

To advocate for the unborn then is to advocate against abortion, except in exceptional cases, such as when the life of the mother is at risk.¹¹ This advocacy is not just to save the baby’s life, but also to avoid tragic outcomes for the mother. It is often said that the moral, emotional, and financial, consequences of having a child can be equal to or even greater than having an abortion. Thus, having an abortion is justified as a good thing.¹² And, to deny or restrict a woman’s right to have an abortion is terrible and unjust. My older sister has long been a champion of the pro-choice movement and told me that she’s not for abortion personally, but she wants to ensure women who want one always have that option. I think she says that because of the devastating effects an unwanted pregnancy and child can have on the woman. Of course, my sister is right on that.

But, we need to also remember how having an **abortion has devastating effects on the woman too**.¹³ Abortion causes 10% of all mental health issues in women. And it makes women more than twice as likely to commit suicide. Women who abort are 55% more likely to struggle with mental health than women who would carry an unplanned pregnancy to term. Abortion does not just end the life of a baby, it also can be harmful for mothers.

So, we advocate against abortion because the unborn are people to be loved. We need to cherish, protect, and advocate for them, especially as they cannot speak for themselves.

b. Mothers Are People to be Loved

But, **God also highly prizes and cherishes the mother**. *Lex talionis* applies for any harm done to either the mother or her child. The death penalty in verse 23 applies to death of the mother too, because she is obviously also made in God’s image. So, she deserves protection, support, affirmation, and love.

Being a mother can be the hardest thing in the world. Motherhood is often a dying to self. It can be incredibly rewarding but also painful in so many ways. So, **we need to support and encourage the mothers**

¹⁰ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/12/the-things-we-cant-face/600769/>

¹¹ Due to increased accessibility to mifepristone (aka, the abortion pill, which caused almost 2/3 of American abortions in 2023 and is projected to account for nearly 100% of them by 2030) and telehealth (which enables a doctor prescribe mifepristone virtually), abortion rates are actually going up in our nation and around the world. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/fight-life-abortions-invisible/>

¹² <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/a-christian-argument-for-abortion-a-qa-with-rebecca-todd-peters/>

¹³ The following statistics are quoted from an interview with Margaret Gibson at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/q-a-podcast/how-do-we-love-the-unborn-and-their-mother/>.

But, see also 9/18/25 “Fact Sheet: Abortion and Mental Health” from the Charlotte Lozier Institute for more comparisons and conclusions on this issue: <https://lozierinstitute.org/fact-sheet-abortion-and-mental-health/> I realize Lozier is deeply distrusted by the pro-choice side and often described as the anti-abortion movement’s answer to the Guttmacher Institute, which is a research and policy group that supports abortion rights. I cite Lozier not to indicate approval of this group, but to links to research/data. I pray we will review the research as best we can and attempt to make our own conclusions in a fair manner.

around us. I am grateful there are groups at HCC like Mothers of Little Ones and also informal discipling connections between older mothers and younger ones so that new (and veteran) mothers have a space for mutual understanding, support, and care.

But, you don't have to be in MOLO or be a woman to care for mothers. All of us can step up in concrete ways, such as: offer to host a meal at the mom's home, grab and drop off groceries, send or pick up her kids to/from their activities, help her when her hands are full with the kids, babysit her kid(s) to give her a break or enjoy a date night with her husband, text mothers Bible verses or a short prayer, serve in the church's nursery or children's ministry, or just be present to listen to and care for her.

There is a special urgency though to care for mothers facing an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy. Margaret Gibson said it well when she writes: “[B]eing pro-life or life-affirming is not just about the baby. It's about the women and the families that are connected to that pregnancy as well. . . . about caring deeply about the woman who's carrying that child, giving her real options, helping her slow down her thought process and have a safe place to talk. And empowering her to make real choices from a place of hope and freedom. We're talking about caring for her too, in a way that shows the love of Christ and his abundant life, which is the best thing we can offer her.”¹⁴

What Gibson says is why HCC supports organizations like The Source (see bulletin) that take a holistic approach toward caring for young women facing an unwanted/unexpected pregnancy.¹⁵ But, as the church, we also need to stick with these courageous young women long after they give birth, as they walk the difficult road of raising their child. It will take a lot of time, sacrifice, and investment, but I can think of fewer things more important that HCC could do.

Sadly though, churches themselves often are not places where such young women feel cared, especially if comes to the heart wrenching decision about whether to have an abortion. 76% of women in a LifeWay survey said that local churches had no influence on their decision to have an abortion.¹⁶ This is terribly sad, and again this is one reason why it is important to preach on this subject, even if it can stir up controversy or strong feelings.¹⁷

A sister in Christ once came to me and shared that she had premarital sex with her boyfriend and was pregnant. She also shared that this was not the first time this happened and that she previously had an

¹⁴ “How Do We Love the Unborn and Their Mother”, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/q-a-podcast/how-do-we-love-the-unborn-and-their-mother>

¹⁵ See www.thesource.org. You can also support pregnancy resource centers, thousands of which have been opened by Christians across the nation. Heartbeat International, Care Net, and National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA) are the three major PRC networks, operating nearly 2,000 pregnancy centers. See *Family Research Council Pregnancy Resource Center Service Report, Second Edition* on how these centers empower women, help families and strengthen communities. <https://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF12A47.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Care-Net-Final-Presentation-Report-Revised.pdf>. See [Slide 12](#). As one author described: “In 12 years of counseling at a local pregnancy center, I observed that the most common fear a woman with an unexpected pregnancy has is in telling her mother, father, or church.” <https://www.todayschristianwoman.com/articles/2012/january/unwantedpregnancies.html>

¹⁷ A 2025 Family Research Council study found that about 20% of regular churchgoers had “paid for, encouraged, or chosen to have an abortion.” <https://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF25J65.pdf>

abortion without talking to anyone because she was afraid and ashamed. She painfully kept it under wraps. I was deeply saddened by the prior abortion, but also more saddened by how she felt like she could not talk to anybody about it for fear of judgment.

So, it is vital that we **show grace and compassion**, not judgment and punishment, **for women who have had an abortion or are thinking of getting one**. Not only can it bring shame and pain to them, but also spiritual guilt. So, I want to encourage any sisters here today who had an abortion: know that the blood of Christ covers all your sins, including those related to abortion. Your aborted baby is safe in the Father's arms (I am happy to speak to you more about why I believe this to be so afterward), and God's grace is more than sufficient, able to help you piece your life back together and move forward in his hope and love.

V. Gospel: Christ's Love for Us Compels Us to Love Them Both

And it is God's grace and love which is the ultimate implication from today's text. Exodus 21 is part of God's good, holy and perfect law, and the sum of his law is love. And Christ, being the fulfillment of God's promises made in the Old Testament, rightly said in Matthew 22:37-40 that loving God and loving others are the two great commandments on which "*depend all the Law and the Prophets.*"

While *lex talionis* reminds us that we deserve punishment for our sin, Christ's death on the cross reminds us that God is just yet also merciful and loving (Rom 3:26). Christ fulfilled the Law because of his perfect, righteous life. And we are saved by his "stripe-for-stripe" flogging, "wound-for-wound" healing, and "life-for-life" death on the cross.

He ransomed us from God's judgment by the price of his blood. He fulfilled God's justice for our sin and showed us what perfect love is. You cannot save yourself by law keeping, but Christ has kept the law and is the "end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Ro 10:4). His life-for-life sacrifice exemplifies the love that God has for the baby, and his mother. His love compels us to love them both.

VI. Conclusion

Even though our nation continues to wrestle over abortion, may HCC be a reflection of God's heart for both the baby and his mother in word and deed. Though others may use inflammatory rhetoric and shameful tactics to advocate their position, may HCC build a culture that affirms and protects life and seeks to serve the vulnerable and injured.

As God's word pushes against abortion, may it also push us toward loving the mother and her unborn baby because that is what God does.