

# Topic far broader than opposing abortion

I am a firm believer in "right to life." However, I contend that this profound phrase covers much more than the abortion issue that has become its moniker. Personally, I believe that God, not the U.S. Constitution or a Supreme Court ruling, is the final authority on the matter. I believe that a heartbeat is enough to validate personhood and protection for

those fetuses conceived in a mother's womb. Clearly, everyone in America does not agree and so the debates continue.



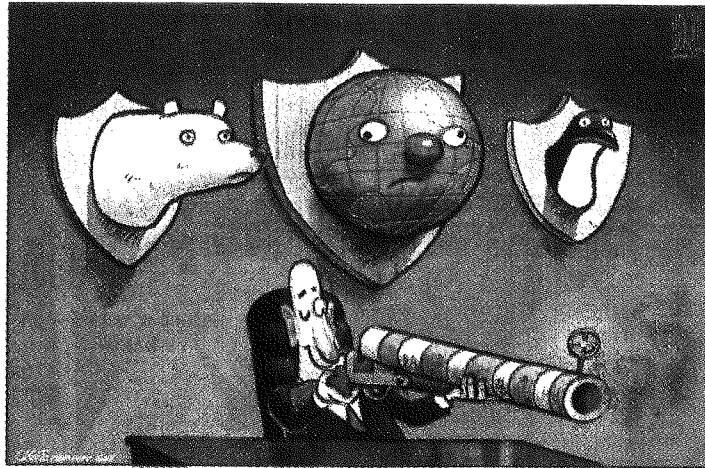
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Board of Contributors

However, I strongly oppose narrowing the focus of the right-to-life movement just to abortion.

I happen to also be against capital punishment and find it quite inconsistent to believe in an anti-abortion stance and then kill inmates on "death row." Displaying no grace for the imprisoned violates sincere right-to-life principles. In my theology, God can forgive the worst of sinners. Who are we to take human life?

My right-to-life principles go even further. I believe that helping the poor, the marginalized, the immigrant and even our so-called "enemies" are right-to-life issues. It has always seemed ironic that there is so much passion to protect the unborn, yet so little to passion to protect the born.



There seems to be plenty of compassionless blame to go around for the pregnant 13-year old, the adjudicated juvenile, the addicted homeless man or woman, or the Hindu, Muslim or Latin American immigrant. Don't they too have the right to a full and meaningful life? Shouldn't we care about them as much as unborn babies or does one's physical birth suddenly excuse compassion? Are we not compelled to love everyone regardless of whether we agree with the views of others?

Let me risk offending the rest of you with one more God-given tenet: I believe caring for the earth should be part of the right-to-life movement if it is to show any integrity and consistency in principle. In my view, God created the earth and humankind in his image and called it "good." Then he gave us, his creation, the cultural mandate. He said to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:26-28), "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill

the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." In other words, we were given the responsibility to take care of God's world as good stewards so that it would remain good then and for future generations.

Once again, we failed. From the expulsion of disobedient humans from the beautiful and sustainable garden that God created, we find ourselves outside that garden in a world now moving toward unsustainability. Instead of owning our part of "creation care" where 21,000 children die daily from hunger-related causes, where millions cannot drink clean water, where the very fish, birds and animals we were given to protect and subdue for future generations are becoming extinct, we become indifferent. Instead of protecting the earth and seas, we pollute our globe, politicize the issues

and ignore science that points to destructive climate change. With little guilt, we justify destructive energy sources, throw plastic bottles into our oceans and defend our greed and selfishness as a right of the wealthy and the entitled.

In 1970, Sen. Gaylord Nelson founded "Earth Day" as a national awareness campaign to focus on the environmental deterioration we are causing. Fifty years later, a billion people in 192 countries now recognize the importance of reclaiming our role of responsibility to our one world. It is not just another day, but a day of awareness and awakening.

"Right to life" means fighting for everyone, even the unborn of future years. With a compassionate heart, we can change our own habits which destroy the environment. We can be the voice for the voiceless of the impoverished children who are hungry in lands that once produced more than enough food. We can stand in our churches and proclaim that creation care is a significant call to the God who called it into being as part of his kingdom. We can choose action and advocacy instead of indifference and silence.

**Jimmy Dorrell is co-founder and president of Mission Waco/Mission World and pastor of Church Under the Bridge. "Urban REAP" is Mission Waco's creation care program at 1505 N. 15th St., with aquaponics, composting, solar energy and rainwater catchment projects designed to help educate our community of the importance of a sustainable world. Tours are open to the public, as well the purchase of products. The mission recently received a \$10,000 grant that is seeking matching funds.**