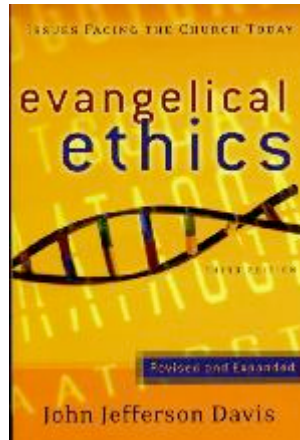


**Davis, J.J. (1985). [Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today](#) (pp. 129-157). Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.**



## **OVERVIEW**

John Jefferson Davis, Ph.D., is currently a professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Dr. Davis has a long-standing history and involvement with various pro-life organizations. He has served as chair of the Board of Directors of Massachusetts Citizens for Life, founding member of the Board of Directors of Birthright of Beverly, Massachusetts, and member of the Board of Directors of the Value of Life Committee.

In *Evangelical Ethics*, Dr. Davis boldly attempts to address moral and ethical concerns facing society today. Standing firm, Davis presents all sides of the various arguments and substantiates his claims through biblical scripture. In chapter six, "Abortion," the discussion is segmented by "Historical and Legal Background," "Medical Aspects," the "Psychological Dimension," and "Biblical, Theological, and Ethical Considerations."

Historically, questions surrounding abortion have been debated since 2737 B.C. Several major written records include some form of prohibition or disapproval of abortion, including the Code of Hammurabi and the Laws of Tiglath-Pileser. Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates also specified opinions on abortion.

More recently, "the Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, handed down on Jan. 22, 1973, dramatically altered the legal situation and gave the United States abortion-on-demand. In this decision the Justices, by a 7-2 majority, held that during the first trimester of pregnancy the state could not regulate abortion..." (p. 133). "Legal abortions have increased from 898,000 in 1974 to 1,574,000 in 1982, according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute" (p. 130).

Medically, Davis provides detailed information on a variety of methods of abortion, including vacuum curettage, dilation and curettage ("D&C"), dilation and evacuation, hysterectomy, prostaglandin, and hypertonic saline. Davis also notes that most abortions are happening for social reasons rather than medical. He continues, "advances in medical knowledge are making it increasingly clear that human life of a very special order is being destroyed every time an abortion takes place" (p. 136). In addition, Davis refutes the claim that abortion is actually safer than having the baby, and offers evidence that abortion increases the risk of problems in later pregnancies.

It is difficult to obtain data about the psychological implications of abortion. Yet, from personal interviews, other studies, and records, Davis maintains that abortion has an incredibly negative impact not only on the mother who has the abortion, but also on the father, as well as on doctors and nurses who perform abortions.

For many, the real debate is between the proponents of the " 'indications' and 'life of the mother' position" (pp. 144-145). Davis addresses rape situations and the likelihood of a resulting pregnancy, and the argument of 'potential' and 'actual' life. It becomes very clear that Davis holds to the "life of the mother" position.

Inevitably, abortion will remain a controversial issue in everyday, real life situations. Critical questions still emerge. Is an unborn fetus really a human being? When does life begin? Dr. Davis concludes his view with a poignant illustration, "If a hunter were to see a movement behind a bush and shoot at it, without being sure that the movement were not caused by a human being rather than by an animal, such action would be morally irresponsible. Regarding abortion, any doubts concerning the humanity of the unborn child should be resolved in favor of developing human life" (p. 148).

## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. Are you fully informed about the information and the issue of abortion? What are some different viewpoints?
2. Do you understand the implications of an abortion procedure?
3. Is abstinence until marriage a realistic possibility? Why or why not?
4. What are alternatives to abortion?

## **IMPLICATIONS**

- Abortion is a complicated issue with good arguments on both sides.
- It is important to explain all sides of this issue ethically so educated moral decisions can be made.
- Make some careful decisions about sexual activity before it happens. If a person consents to have sex, then he or she is also consenting to the possibility of human conception.

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