

# Abortion

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Few subjects stir up as much emotion in people today as the subject of abortion. The controversy surrounding abortion has legal, political, and religious elements and can even divide Christians from fellow Christians.

## The World Accepts Abortion, but to God it's Wrong

Abortion has become a common occurrence in today's society, justified through a variety of misleading and erroneous arguments. Modern day prophets have soundly condemned abortion as violating the commandments of the Lord: "Thou shalt [not] kill, nor do anything like unto it" (D&C 59:6).

## Church Involvement in the Abortion Issue

The practical question is whether or not there are any reasons to justify abortion. The Catholic Church for instance remains firm that there are no conditions under which abortion is acceptable—rape or incest included. Some Christian Churches don't have written policies, but rather speak out against abortion and encourage their members to make wise Christian-based choices.

For example, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints strongly counsels its members with the following in regards to abortion: "The Church opposes abortion as one of the most revolting and sinful practices of this day. Members must not submit to, be a party to, or perform an abortion. The only exceptions are the rare cases where, in

the opinion of competent medical counsel, the life or health of the woman is in jeopardy or the pregnancy resulted from incest or rape. Even then, the woman should consider an abortion only after counseling with her husband and bishop or branch president, and receiving divine confirmation through prayer. Church members who, ignoring either priesthood consultation or the approbation of the Lord, "encourage, perform, or submit to an abortion are to be disciplined by Church councils, as necessary. The Church policy statement concludes: As far as has been revealed, a person may repent and be forgiven for the sin of abortion" (General Handbook of Instructions, 1983).

## Choices in an Unwanted Pregnancy

Christian churches should encourage couples who conceive a child out of wedlock to pursue the path of marriage. Should the prospects of a successful marriage be unlikely, then the couple is urged to pursue the path adoption.

## Instances Where Medical Abortion is Acceptable

From the earlier statement, there are exceptionally rare concessions for medically assisted abortions under the following circumstances:

- Pregnancy has resulted from incest or rape
- The life or health of the woman is in jeopardy in the opinion of competent medical authority
- The fetus is known, by competent medical authority, to have severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.

Even when one of these conditions exists, a medically assisted abortion should only be considered after consultation has taken place between the pregnant woman and the bishop, and there is divine confirmation given through prayer that an abortion is necessary.

Unfortunately liberties may be taken in interpreting the health of the mother, especially by clinical experts; however, a three-step process (a filter if you will), provides adequate protection against "rationalization." The process provides a clinical check, ecclesiastical check, and then an individual check—the last two being driven almost entirely by prayer and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

It is fair to say that a pregnant woman is likely to be in a traumatized emotional state if she is considering an abortion, and therefore she may have some difficulty in discerning the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the ecclesiastical leader must take an appropriately strong role for the woman to ensure the matter is appropriately handled from a spiritual standpoint.

### **The Spiritual State of Aborted Children**

An innocent child who is aborted—justified or not—will end up in the presence of our Heavenly Father for all eternity. This must not be a justification for abortion, but rather an understanding that when the path of abortion is chosen to address the larger issues at hand the Lord will take care of the aborted child for time and all time and eternity.

### **Conclusion**

When an abortion is performed for personal or social expediency, the commandments of God will have been violated, and those involved are subject to Church discipline—up to and including excommunication.

Ultimately, regardless of what Christian sect being professed, the decision comes down to the individual. Having a unified support system within a church community can make a huge difference in abortion rates. For example, data from the U.S. Govt. Census Bureau lists Utah, a family oriented state with strong church communities, as the state with the lowest teen pregnancy rate and the lowest abortion rate in the United States (Statistical Abstract of the United States 1997: National Data Book. Washington, D.C.: Census Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Commerce (1997)).

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