

Wanted or Unwanted: Does It Change the Value of Life?

Two months ago, thirty college-aged students were sitting in a room. Although I can't remember the details specifically, it went something like this:

We were all asked to stand up. The speaker, a woman by the name of Cassandra Vaughn, asked the firstborns to raise their hands. “Approximately 40 percent of abortions are performed on women who have no other children¹,” she said. “So if you are the firstborn in your family, please sit down.” As a result, about a third of the audience sat down. Next she asked which students had mothers who were under 25 years old when the student were born. “Fifty percent of abortions are performed on women under the age of 25,²” she continued. “So if this is you, please sat down.” Several more students sat.

“And how many of you have parents who, at the time you were conceived, still had college loans to pay off or house payments to make?” she inquired. “According to a 2004 AGI survey, 73 percent of abortions are influenced, at least in part, by the woman not being able to afford her baby³. If this is you, please sit down.” Many more students sat. After just a couple more questions like these, there was practically no one, if anyone at all, left standing. The point was simple: there is no such thing as a perfect pregnancy. One could argue that if no pregnancy and no person is perfect, it is fair to claim that **a person's value does not depend on whether he or she is perfect. Neither is a person's value related to his or her appearance, intelligence, achievements, abilities, dependence on others, or if he or she is considered “wanted.” Rather, people are inherently valuable simply because**

1 http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html

2 http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html

3 <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/abreasons.html>

they are human.

Before we can describe why people are valuable, we must first think about the word, “value.” What is value? I can value my car, or my house, but these things are completely different from valuing a human being. A price tag can be placed on both cars and homes, but the price of a person cannot be set. Ask anyone you know, and they'd probably say that humans are *invaluable*...that no finite amount of money can ever measure a person's worth. Yet, a surgical abortion on an unborn child can cost as little as 450 dollars.⁴ The cost of drugs used in assisted suicide is approximately 40 dollars.⁵ A contraceptive abortifacient such as Plan B can cost as little as 10 dollars⁶. *Ten dollars is the cost to take an innocent human life!* A life that, once ended, will never again come into this world's existence. A life, that once ended, will never be able to contribute even a warming smile to a friend in need.

But we still haven't answered our question, what is it that makes humans valuable? Well, diamonds are valuable because they are considered beautiful. Computers are valuable because they allow access to resources, can perform calculations, and store data. Plants are valuable because they provide us with a source of food and oxygen. But what makes people valuable? We may not all be beautiful, but we are still valued. We may not be highly intelligent, but we are still valued. We may not have many achievements, but we are still valued. Take, for example, a teenager who defies his parents, drops out of school, becomes addicted to drugs, and runs away from home. Do his parents ever stop loving him, searching for him, praying for him, and hoping that he'll someday come home to them? What did the teenager ever do that makes his parents value him? Not much. Yet, he is still valued and cherished.

4 <http://www.fwhc.org/abortion/abpill-compare-surgical.htm>

5 <http://law.jrank.org/pages/1096/Euthanasia-Assisted-Suicide-Pros-Cons.html>

6 <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/emergency-contraception-morning-after-pill-4363.htm>

Just like a person's value does not depend on appearance or intelligence, being valuable does not depend on someone's abilities either. In this country, we believe that we are all created equally and that we have certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These rights cannot be taken away or added to based on athletic capabilities or IQ level, and so we can rightly conclude that human value is independent of one's abilities and disabilities.

Let's keep going. Sometimes it is argued that a human being is only a valuable person if he is not dependent on others. For example, proponents of abortion claim that a fetus is not a person because the fetus cannot live outside his mother's womb for those nine months. Similarly, euthanasia proponents say that ill patients who require a feeding tube to get their daily nutrients are no longer valuable in society. But who among us can honestly say that they are not even partially dependent on someone or something else? For example, thousands of Americans are reliant on pacemakers, kidney machines, or insulin to keep going from day to day. No one doubts that these people are just as valuable as everyone else, so why should an unborn fetus or an ill patient be any different? While people may be dependent upon others for their survival, they are not dependent on others for their value as human beings.⁷

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Along these same lines, being wanted or unwanted does not change the value of a human life. Think about it. Being “wanted” is a subjective concept. If a human being's value is determined by if he is “wanted,” we first have to ask, “Wanted by whom?” For example, were European Jews wanted during the 1930s and '40s? The German government said no. The Nazis also said that disabled children and adults were not wanted. Does this really mean that the Jews and the disabled were not valuable human beings, worthy of respect, love, and affection? Or what about Dred Scott, the black slave who was told he had no right to freedom like ordinary white citizens because he was property, and not “human.” In 1856, the United States Supreme Court said Dred Scott was not a person only because the Court did not *want* Scott to be considered a person. Yet, one hundred and fifty years later, practically every American considers the Court's decision a disgrace, because *we know* that human value does not depend on if someone else wants to give it value. Rather, a person gets his value simply because he is human. His value does not depend on his skin color, size, accomplishments, economic standing, occupation, or past history. His value is not determined on whether he is wanted or unwanted by the government or anyone else. Like I said before, he is inherently valuable simply because he is a member of the human family.

Now let's take this into perspective by saying that a small child were to ask her parents, "Mommy, Daddy, what makes me special? What makes me valuable?" Most parents would probably come up with a simple answer to reassure the child of her worth, but if a parent replied by saying, "You aren't special and you aren't valuable," we would think there must be something terrible wrong with this parent. It wouldn't matter whether the child was beautiful, smart, accomplished, self-reliant, or the result of a planned pregnancy. The child's value is independent of such things. To assert that a person's life depends on something like if he or she is wanted is absurd. Wouldn't it make much more sense to ask ourselves what is wrong with us if we feel like another human being is not valuable and wanted in this world? Mother Teresa said the world's greatest poverty is the feeling of being unwanted and unloved, and she addressed this by reaching out to such "poor" individuals. Instead of killing "unwanted" persons through abortion, euthanasia, and the like, why don't we focus on changing ourselves so that we always strive to love and care for those in need, like the poor, the sick, the vulnerable, the elderly, and the unborn? After all, all human life is valuable, and it's time we start treating it as such.