

Adaptable to all age groups

Time: 30-40 Minutes

Objective

To introduce students to the chief arguments for and against the pro-life position. Students will understand some of the chief pro-choice arguments (the unborn having less value than persons outside the womb, arguments from autonomy) and how to respond to them. The “spectrum of disability” will be introduced, explaining basic concepts of human interconnectedness and solidarity.

Overview

Gather

Opening prayer, welcome & Intros (3min)

Proclaim

VOX VITAE (15min)

Break

Activity & Questions (7min)

Send

Closing Prayer (5min)

Gather

About our Organization

Right to Life of Central California is an educational nonprofit. Our goals and mission are to teach groups within our community about the dignity of human life, to provide resources to women facing unexpected pregnancies or abortion, and to be an advocate within our community for human dignity.

Our subsidiary corporation, the Obria Medical Clinics of Central California, is a non profit prenatal healthcare clinic that provides women with high-quality, dignified prenatal healthcare resources regardless of ability to pay or insurance status. Parents and children who are facing challenging circumstances and wish to seek reliable information from a faithfully pro-life perspective may reach out to either of these organizations.

About the Presenters

Introduce the presenter scheduled for this talk.

Ice Breaker

Lead a fun activity to get the students engaged and ready to pay attention during the presentation.



Proclaim

VOX VITAE

Threshold questions for debating abortion (and other moral issues):

- Faith and Reason
 - o St. Thomas: how we learn
 - Faith: God reveals truths to us directly
 - Reason: We learn things by observation of the natural world/human nature, and drawing logical conclusions
 - We can discern moral propositions from both
 - o To be convincing in an argument, you must find a “lowest common denominator” way to argue our beliefs in a way that is convincing to everyone.
 - o Faith provides you, as an individual Christian, with a sure grounding for moral judgments, but isn’t convincing to a non-Christian audience.
 - Don’t cite Bible verses to atheists!
 - o You can defend your moral judgments without needing arguments from religion:
 - Lying is wrong because human speech is ordered towards communicating truth, and lies disrupt social ties and order.
 - God ALSO guides us to understand lying is wrong by condemning it in the 10 Commandments.
- Avoid letting your opponents “frame” you badly
 - o “The only arguments against abortion are religious.” Reject this premise!
 - o First, religious arguments are not “illegitimate” in public life.
 - The Abolitionist, Civil Rights, and Women’s Suffrage Movements were largely led by Christian leaders appealing to aspects of Christian teaching.
 - Religious belief has a rich history of positively informing public life and public debate in America.
 - o Secondly, you can have more than one grounding for an argument (e.g., why lying is wrong)

Basics of biology and how this frames pro-choice arguments

- Human life begins at conception, when two gametes (cells from mom and dad’s bodies) unite to form the zygote, the first cell of a new human organism separate from mom and dad.
- We are continuing to learn more about the incredible changes that happen almost instantaneously at egg-sperm fusion. Conception is not a “process,” but a near-instantaneous change from two separate kinds of things to one new thing.
- Some people will manipulate language to say that someone is not “pregnant” until certain processes are finished (e.g., implantation). This is different from the question of when a new organism is formed: egg-sperm fusion.

- Pro-choice challenge: how do we justify abortion? Two ways



- Unborn children are not as important, and thus we may kill them
- The right of the mom not to be pregnant outweighs the right of the child to live

SLED Test

- Common reasons pro-choice people use for stating that unborn children have less moral value and should be denied a “right to life”
- Size
 - Smaller people are not of more value than larger people. Size-based classifications require fundamentally rejecting the idea of meaningful human equality and involves arbitrary line-drawing
- Level of development
 - Lessened development is an irrational standard for depriving people of value
 - It is an able-ist standard that cannot draw a rational, meaningful line between a fetus and a 6-month-old, or a fetus and a person in a coma, or a fetus and certain adults with serious mental disabilities.
- Environment
 - Where you are does not determine how valuable you are
 - The fact that you are inside a womb and thus less visible does not lessen your value
- Degree of Dependency
 - Impossible to separate a fetus’ “degree of dependency” meaningfully from that of a 1-year-old.
 - Dependency is natural part of human life
 - Except in cases of rape, dependency is the result of willing choices on part of mother and father

What it means to be human vs. strict autonomy

- The “best” pro-choice arguments center on autonomy
 - Women have the right not to be physically burdened by pregnancy
 - If you found yourself attached to somebody’s kidneys against your will, and wanted to disconnect yourself, it’s not your fault if that person dies.
- Why autonomy arguments fail: we all depend on each other
 - Spectrum of Disability
 - We are born dependent, and are dependent for our entire childhood
 - In our time of strength, we take on the burdens of caring for others dependent on us
 - I don’t *choose* for my parents to be sick, but I *must* take care of them if/when they are.
 - At the end of our lives, or after serious illness or accident, we are again dependent on others

- Life involves freely giving and gratefully receiving care. The bonds of family, friendship, and even political community require this.
- Who is the unborn?
 - Many “autonomy” arguments treat unborn children as strangers to us, with whom we should have an arm’s-length relationship
 - Few human relationships

Break

Small Group Questions

Depending on the size of class/group presentation, pair students up or divide into small groups.

Send

Prayer of Support

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of being created in your image and likeness. We thank you for the strengths you have given each of us. Help us to not fear or compete with the strengths of each other, but recognize the importance of uplifting and supporting one another. We ask that you help we seek ways to support one another. We also know that we each face particular challenges. Allow us to be aware of the challenges those around us face and make an effort to help one another overcome them. Finally, we ask that you help us to always recognize the dignity of each person we encounter, to always look for ways to serve one another. Help us be the gift to one another you created us to be. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, as we pray:

Our Father who art in heaven... Hail Mary, full of grace...

Composed by John Gerardi, revised by Michelle Ferrer.

For more resources visit www.rtlcc.org

To schedule a session please contact info@righttolifeca.org or (559) 229-2229.

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