



Pro-Life Bulletin Board

A project of American Life League, Inc.

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What about abortion when the child might have a disability?

One of the most common questions expectant parents hear is whether they are hoping for a baby girl or a baby boy. Their common response is not surprising: "As long as the baby is healthy, we'll be happy with a boy or a girl."

But what happens when the baby is not healthy? What is the attitude of parents whose preborn child is diagnosed with spina bifida or Down's syndrome? Can abortion ever be a justified "treatment" for parents expecting a child with disabilities?

The role of prenatal testing

Modern technology offers today's parents the opportunity to "see" into the womb. In many ways, these tests can be useful. Treatment may be undertaken, including fetal surgery. Special medical teams can be available at the child's birth to ensure that delivery goes smoothly and that help is available, if needed. Parents can prepare themselves and their family spiritually, psychologically, emotionally and financially for the birth of a child with special needs. These are all good reasons for prenatal testing.

Increasingly, however, prenatal testing is not done with these reasons in mind. It is done with the intent to "cure the disease" by killing the child. In this respect prenatal testing is wrong. Such "search and destroy" tactics are based on a eugenics mentality, which says that some human lives—those that do not meet an arbitrary standard of mental or physical health—are not worth living.

When abortion is used to solve the problem of a disability, it is discrimination of the most severe

kind. These children are not merely discriminated against for their disability; they are killed because of it. Consider the suggestion of killing a person with Down's syndrome in order to "cure" him. To most people, the idea is repugnant. Preborn children diagnosed with disabilities deserve to be treated with the same respect as born people with or without a disability.

What if the baby will die anyway?

Anencephaly is a condition in which part of a baby's brain fails to develop. Most children with anencephaly die within hours or days after birth. Would abortion be acceptable in this circumstance? Quite simply, no. Abortion is direct, intentional killing. And killing is always wrong! The pro-life response in this situation is: Always care. Never kill.

To one extent or another every human being is disabled. Some people struggle with math or spelling and are slower in school. Some are physically uncoordinated and have difficulty in sports. Other people have difficulty with interpersonal relationships and cannot work well with others.

No matter what the individual differences, all people share a common humanity. It is this factor that compels us to respect the lives of our brothers and sisters in the human family no matter how abled or disabled. Even more importantly, we respect the fact that every human life has been created by God to fulfill a unique and indispensable task. It is not the job of human beings to decide which people live and which people die. God is the Author of all life, and these decisions are His alone.

Pregnant and in need of help?

Heartbeat International: 800-395-4357