



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Who Switched the Labels? Clarifying the Pro-Life Message

Guest(s): Scott Klusendorf

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson, and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and today, we're bringing you a classic presentation given by our ministry friend Scott Klusendorf at Cedarville University. Scott is the president of the Life Training Institute, where he trains pro-life advocates to persuasively defend their views.

Scott is an author and has had articles on pro-life apologetics published in multiple Christian and conservative journals. He's a graduate of UCLA and holds a master's degree in Christian apologetics from Biola University. Scott is married to his wife, Stephanie, and together they have four children. Let's join Scott Klusendorf right now as he shares about what it really means to be pro-life right here on Family Talk.

Scott Klusendorf: I want to speak to you this morning on this theme, who switched the tags clarifying the pro-life message in a confusing age. Because men and women, as we are gathered here today, there is a full-court attempt, a full-court press to redefine what it means to be pro-life. In fact, in the last election there were evangelical groups formed, evangelicals for Biden, pro-life evangelicals for Biden that said, "You must vote for a candidate sworn to uphold abortion wholesale because it's the pro-life thing to do," and a lot of people bought the switching of the tags. The name pro-life is being redefined before our very eyes. And we, as Christians, committed to Jesus Christ committed to the Imago Dei, the image of God and man that God literally created human beings, not accidentally, not through some evolutionary process that made us accidents of nature but literally breathed into us the breath of lives and who put in us His image.

We are going to have to defend that biblical truth in ways we didn't even imagine in the past. And here's the scary thing. We're going to have to start doing it with our own people who ought to know better as if somehow you qualify as pro-life, even if you support abortion, as long as you're okay on the environment, as long as you're okay on minimum wage laws, as long as you're okay on maybe refugee policy. Well, you're pro-life. And it's okay if you're completely pro-abortion. How do we get to this point? We're going to have to

be prepared to answer this, and here are the three questions you need to be clear on, and I have good news for you this morning. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to defend the pro-life you. You don't even have to have a graduate degree. You don't even have to have a college degree or a high school degree. You just need to be clear on three questions. And if you're clear on these three questions, the Lord will use you moving forward to be His ambassador on the pro-life issue.

And we need pro-life ambassadors who can make their case persuasively and yet graciously to a culture out there that doesn't even know what pro-life means anymore. Here are the three questions. Number one, we need to be clear on the question, what is the unborn? Number two, we need to be clear on the question of what makes us valuable. And finally, we need to be clear on the question, what's our duty? If we get these three questions clear, we're going to be all right, and we will be able to give to this culture a defense of life that it needs desperately. Let's look at that first question. What is the unborn? I don't know how many of you have read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, but there's a remarkable exchange in chapter 32 where Huck has been out on an adventure. He happens on the property of Aunt Sally, and Aunt Sally sees him coming down the road, and she rushes out to meet him, thinking it's Tom Sawyer. She's mixed up. And she says to him, "Where have you been, my boy? We've all been waiting for you. Where have you been?"

And Huck doesn't know what to do. He's a kid. He makes up a story, a lie. He says, "Well, ma'am, we were on a steamboat, and it blew a cylinder head. That's why I'm late." And Aunt Sally says, "My gosh, was anybody hurt? No ma'am. It killed a negro, but nobody got hurt. Well, that's good," said Aunt Sally, "because sometimes people do get hurt." Whoa, what was just assumed about the Black man? That he wasn't one of us. It wasn't argued for, it was simply assumed. And people do this with abortion all the time. They simply assume the unborn are not human. Republican Senator Orrin Hatch from Utah was hoping to fund embryonic stem cell research where we take human embryos we destroy them so we can take their bodily cells and inject them into the bodies of people suffering from illness. And Senator Orrin Hatch, a Republican, said the following to those who were opposing that research. He said it would be a shame to let an ethical concept get in the way of cures for real people.

Senator Hatch, you know what you just justified? The Tuskegee experiments where we took African American men promised them a cure for syphilis, but we basically injected sugar into them so we could study how the disease killed them. This is horrific stuff. On the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, two days after his inauguration, the President of the United States celebrating *Roe v. Wade* said, and I'll paraphrase, "Healthcare is a right for everyone. It's a universal right, and my administration is committed to making sure everyone benefits from this universal right." Mr. President, does "everyone" include the unborn? He just assumed they weren't human. He didn't argue for it. It was simply assumed. You and I, as pro-life Christians, must challenge that assumption. Virtually every

argument you hear on the street for abortion assumes the unborn aren't human. People talk about choice and privacy.

Would they talk that way if we were talking about killing two-year-olds? They talk about trusting people to make their own personal decisions. Would they talk that way if we were speaking of killing five-year-olds? Never. Why do they do that with abortion? Because they assume the unborn are not human, and we have to flush that assumption out into the open. What is the unborn? I'll answer it for you right now. From the earliest stages of development, you, from the one-cell stage, you were a distinct living and whole human being. You weren't part of another human being like skin cells on the back of my hand. You were whole living members of the human family even though you had yet to grow and mature. Why don't people get this? What seems to be the problem where this just goes right over their heads? Well, there's a couple of reasons. The first is they look at a picture of an early embryo, and they think, "That doesn't look like my cute niece, Audrey. It looks like just a ball of cells."

And you know what? I don't know if you've ever seen a picture of an early embryo. You can't even see it with a naked eye. It doesn't look like a baby, and they're right. It's not a baby. But it is a human being at the earliest stages of development, and people's intuitions mistakenly believe, "Well, that's not one of us because it doesn't look like us," but sometimes our intuitions are wrong. From the one-cell stage, men and women, you were already there. We just couldn't see you because you were still developing. That's the science of embryology. But there's another reason why people don't get this. Some people don't want to get it. Their ignorance is sustained by denial. They've so redefined in their own minds what abortion is. They've lost all real contact with its true character, and they've literally relativized abortion as a choice. You like chocolate ice cream? I like vanilla. Don't judge one another. How do we reach those people? Answer. We give them a chance to view what's actually at stake.

There are men and women listening to me right now that, for you, the issue of abortion is not unclear at all because you've experienced it. And I don't know if I'm talking to a guy who encouraged a girl to abort or a young woman who made that choice because you thought you had no other way out. I want you to know something. We're not here today to condemn you, and it's because we are committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that gospel, men and women, puts every one of us in this auditorium this morning on very, very serious footing before God because God creates a good, wonderful world for us to enjoy and worship Him, but we don't do that. We rebel against Him. That's what our first parents did. They rebelled against the King of the universe. And God, who would've been just to be done with all of us and destroy the whole lot of us, sends Jesus to bear in full His judgment against sin, and God has to judge sin. He's a holy God. He can't just sweep it under the rug.

And He did that by pouring out His wrath on Jesus, who stood in our place, condemned as our substitute so that those who trust in Him are no longer judged on their own sinful merits. They're judged on the merits of Christ, who

lived the perfect life in our place and absorbed the judgment we all deserve. That's the gospel. But it gets better. For those who trust in Jesus, God the Father is no longer your judge. Rather, He's your heavenly Father, and you get adopted into His family as a dearly loved child. That's the gospel, men and women. In a culture that has switched the labels on us, how do we bring clarity back? The visuals reawaken moral intuitions in a way that words alone simply cannot. That's why you went and saw movies like *Schindler's List*, *The Passion of the Christ*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Hacksaw Ridge*. Gruesome movies that conveyed truths words alone cannot. There's a historical example that will help us here.

In 1955, Emmett Till, an African American boy 14 years of age, journey from Chicago, where he was living at the time, to Money, Mississippi, to spend the summer with his cousin. And when he got off the train in 1955, he began to brag to his cousin about his two white girlfriends back home. They said, "We don't believe you. We don't even speak to white girls here, let alone date them." And Emmett said, "I do. I have two white girlfriends." And they said, "Okay, hot shot. We dare you to talk to a white girl down here." That afternoon, Emmett, the cousin, and a group of boys from town go into Bryant's Grocery Store in downtown Money, Mississippi. Emmett goes up to the counter, purchases a piece of gum from the white married woman behind the counter 21 years of age, and as he does so, he innocently but flirtatiously flashes her a big smile and says, "Thanks, babe."

We hear that today we think, "What's the big deal?" Very big deal in 1955 if you were Black. Three nights later, that boy's taken from his uncle's home, where he is spending the summer, by the woman's husband and another man. They drive him outside Money, Mississippi and savagely beat him beyond recognition, breaking nearly every bone in his upper torso. And then, finally, after several hours of that kind of torture, they finished him with a single shot to the head and threw his corpse into the river, where the local sheriff discovered it, presumably three to four days later. The sheriff took what was left of Emmett and didn't even put him in a coffin. Put him in a box, just a box, with a note to Mamie Till, Emmett's mother, that said, "Don't open this. You won't like what you see." And when Mamie Till got the body back in Chicago, she shocked the world with an announcement. She said, "We're going to have a public funeral for my son, Emmett, and it will be an open-casket funeral."

People went berserk. The press said, "You can't do that. Do you understand the condition your boy is in? Yeah," she said, "I do. Do you understand that people will get upset that you showed this? Yes, I do, but I want the whole world to see what they did to my boy." And that image of Emmett Till in the coffin, that black and white image, was published nationally in *Jet Magazine*, and it was a catalyst for launching the civil rights movement in this nation. Why do we show pictures like this? Not to beat up on people who've had abortions but to clarify what's at stake in a culture that has switched the labels on us. If you and I, as pro-life Christians, don't lovingly but truthfully open the casket on abortion, our nation's going to continue to tolerate an injustice it never has to look at. But at the same time we open that casket, we open the truth of God's word that sinners can be

reconciled to their creator because Jesus pays in full for their rebellion. We offer truth and hope.

Second question. What makes humans valuable? In just a moment, I'm going to have you stare around the room at some people. Okay. Not yet, but get ready. 1, 2, 3, stare. Go ahead. All right, look back this way. What makes us equal? We're in a culture obsessed with equality. They want marriage equality. They want income equality, social equality, and the list goes on and on. But what makes us equal in the first place? Are we all physically equal? Not a chance. If Planned Parenthood is right, that it's your physical development that gives you a right to life, and we can intentionally destroy a human fetus because it doesn't measure up to our development standard, if development is what grounds our dignity and rights, those of you with more of it have a greater right to life than those of us with less. Are we all equal in terms of self-awareness? But if Peter Singer is right that we can destroy both a newborn and a fetus because neither one is self-aware, and you have greater self-awareness than me.

If self-awareness is what grounds our dignity and you got more of it than me, you have a greater right to life than me, and human equality can be thrown on the ash heap of history. There's one thing we all share equal in this room. We all have the same human nature, which is Christians we know bears the image of our maker. Now you're thinking, "Wait a minute. That's getting very kind of out there philosophically. What do you mean by human nature?" Well, all living things have natures that determine the kind of thing that they are. For example, your pet dog has a canine nature. Your goldfish has a goldfish nature. Cats, now that I own three of them, I have learned have satanic natures. You have a human nature that bears the image of God. You don't get a human nature in degrees the way you get self-awareness or physical ability. You either have that human nature or you don't. And guess when you got that human nature, men and women, the moment of fertilization.

From the very beginning, you were one of us. Human parents create human offspring, and if anybody calls you on that, ask them how it's possible for two human parents to create offspring that isn't human but later become so. As I often point out to people, there's four differences between you, the embryo, and you, the young adult. There are differences between embryos and adults, but that's not the question. The question is, do those differences matter such that we can say, "It was okay to intentionally kill you back then, but not now." Those differences, as Stephen Schwartz has pointed out, are size, level of development environment, meaning where we're located in degree of dependency. You can use the acronym SLED, S-L-E-D, as a helpful reminder of these four differences. None of them matter. Size. There's your S. You were smaller as an embryo, but since when does body size, as a matter of principle, determine value? Men are generally larger than women. Do men deserve more rights than women simply because they're larger?

What about level of development? You were less developed as an embryo. You know what your answer should be? One you used to use as a teenager all the

time. So. You were real good at that until you got to college and got sophisticated. So, why does that matter? Two-year-old girls are less developed than 21-year-old young women. Two-year-old girls don't even have a developed reproductive system yet. Are they less human and valuable than the 21-year-old who does? This is exactly the point Abraham Lincoln made when he would debate proponents of slavery. Lincoln's critics would say, "That Black man is different from us." And you know what Lincoln's answer was? "So. Is he different from us in ways that justify enslaving him?" The question is not, is he different from us? But do those differences matter? And here's Lincoln's quote almost... I'll give it to you almost word for word.

Quote, "You say, man A is white man. B is dark. Oh, it is skin color. Then the fair-skin man having the right to enslave the dark man. Take care. By that rule, you're a slave to the first person you meet with skin fairer than your own. You say it's not skin color. It's a matter of intellect. The white man, you allege, has superior intellect to the dark man. Take care again. By that rule, you're a slave to the first person you meet with an intellect superior to yours. You say it's not intellect. It's not skin color. It's a matter of interest. The white man having it in his interest to enslave the dark man. Take care, yet again. By that rule, you're a slave to the first person you meet who can make it his interest to enslave you." Do you see what Lincoln just did right there? The same arguments being used to disqualify the Black man work perfectly well to disqualify whites. The same arguments people use to disqualify the unborn as full members of the human family work equally well to disqualify all of us.

Peter Singer, the ethicist at Princeton University I mentioned a moment ago, has an appalling conclusion. He says that no newborn should be considered a person until 30 days after birth, and disabled infants can be killed on the spot by the attending physician if it suits the preferences of the parents. We're appalled by that. You know what I like about Peter Singer? He's consistent. He looks Planned Parenthood in the eye and says, "You folks are drawing arbitrary and illegitimate lines between who counts and who doesn't." There's no ethical difference between a child in the womb and one outside. Neither one is self-aware. Kill both. That's Singer's solution. The biblical one, of course, is quite different than that. Size, level of development, what about environment where you were located? How does where you are determine what you are? How many of you drove or traveled at least a hundred miles to come to school?

300 miles, 700 miles, 800 miles, 880 miles today. I win. Now, I think I'm not going any higher because I was still seeing hands go up. When you took a journey of several hundred miles to come to this campus, you didn't stop being you. If that's true, how does a journey of seven inches down the birth canals suddenly transform you from non-human non-valuable thing we can kill to valuable human being we have to respect? A mere change of location won't get that done for you. And finally, degree of dependency. Sure, you depended on your mother for survival. So. I don't know if you've seen the picture of conjoined twins. I'm going to try to remember their names correctly now. They're, I think,

31 years of age now. They are these two young women. They are joined literally at the hip. You look at them, and there's one set of legs.

Then, from the waist up, they branch off into two body trunks, two shoulders, two heads. But these particular girls cannot be separated without killing both of them. If dependency on another human being means you have no right to life, neither one of those girls have a right to life, and they can be killed. Size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency. None of those are good reasons for saying, "We could kill you then, but not now." I end with this question. What's our duty? I'll give it to you in a sentence. To love our unborn neighbor. How do you do that? Well, first thing you need to do is defend him. Before you leave today, I'm going to tell you how to defend your pro-life view in a minute or less. A minute or less. You're at Thanksgiving. Your Aunt Betty shows up from Boston. She thinks that you're nuts going to Cedarville. She thinks you're nuts being a Christian.

She thinks you're really nuts being a pro-life Christian. And she says to you, between bites of Turkey and stuffing, "Why are you pro-life?" Here's your answer. "Aunt Betty, I'm pro-life because it's wrong to intentionally kill innocent human beings. And the science of embryology is clear that from the earliest stages of development, you were a distinct living and whole human being. You weren't part of another human being like skin cells on the back of my hand. You were already a whole living member of the human family even though you had yet to grow and mature. And you know what else, Aunt Betty? There's no essential difference between the embryo you were and the adult you are today that would justify killing you back then. Differences of size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency are not good reasons for saying, 'We could kill you then, but not now.'"

Now I'm going to guess I got that done in about 45 to 50 seconds, somewhere in that range. How many Bible verses did I cite, but did I communicate biblical truth? You know what you do when you say something like that? You put a pebble in someone's shoe. Ever had a pebble in your shoe when you're out hiking? Wears on you and wears on you until you stop to deal with it. That's our job as pro-life Christians. In a culture where what it means to be pro-life, people have switched the tags on us. We got to be very clear. We've got to be very persuasive in what we're communicating. It doesn't mean we convert people on the spot. It means we give them something to think about. God bless you as you go out there and continue your education at this fine university.

Roger Marsh:

Well, you're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk featuring a powerful presentation today, given by our friend and pro-life leader, Scott Klusendorf. Now, to find out more about Scott and his ministry, visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. "Tough times never last, but tough people do." You've heard that expression over and over again. But if you're going through a difficult season right now, you may be wondering where is God in all of this and why is God allowing me to go through this struggle.

Well, here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we want to walk with you during this challenging season and offer you some encouragement with a free 10-day email series that we call When God Doesn't Make Sense. It's based on Dr. Dobson's book of that same title. Once you sign up, you'll begin to receive messages for 10 days in a row that explore the depths of hardship and also examine its purpose. To begin the process of receiving your 10-day email series called When God Doesn't Make Sense, go to drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series.

Again, that's drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series. I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks for listening today, and may God continue to richly bless you and your family as you grow deeper in your relationship with Him.

Announcer:

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.