**THE SANCTITY OF LIFE**

**STRENGTH AND STRATEGY FOR THE CAUSE OF LIFE**

**Proverbs 24:1-14**

**INTRODUCTION**

Thirty years ago, on January 28, 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada released its landmark decision in the case of *R. v. Morgentaler*. In that case, five out of the seven presiding judges concluded that the abortion laws that existed at the time in the *Criminal Code* were unconstitutional. These five judges did not presume to settle the abortion debate, nor did they find that women have a constitutional right to abortion. Instead, they concluded that *the process* created by Parliament to administrate abortion was unconstitutional, *not* the denial of abortion itself. What they did was they struck down the existing laws at the time, and then they invited Parliament to do its job by filling the legislative void left by the *Morgentaler* case with a new regime that regulated and limited abortion in a constitutionally consistent manner.

The Progressive Conservative government under Prime Minister Mulroney attempted to do just that. In the spring of 1988, a new abortion law was proposed, but it did not pass the House of Commons. A second bill was introduced in 1989. This one passed the House of Commons, but when it came to the Senate, the Senate split 50-50, resulting in a tie and a failure to pass the bill into law. Since then, no further attempts to regulate and restrict abortion have occurred at the Federal level.

What this means is that, in Canada, a doctor can perform an abortion any time before the baby is born without facing criminal sanction, whether the baby is at four weeks’ gestation or forty weeks’ gestation. Canada is one of only four countries in the world that have no legal restrictions on abortion whatsoever. The other three are China, Vietnam, and North Korea.

This is why approximately one hundred thousand abortions take place each year in Canada (as estimated by the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada). To put this into perspective, this is like wiping out the entire populations of Newmarket and King Township every single year.

Many political issues aren’t binary ones. They’re not issues that have either a right outcome or a wrong outcome. For example, last Sunday I referenced the decision of certain Tim Horton’s owners to eliminate paid breaks and certain benefits to compensate for the increase to minimum wage. Is that a binary issue? I don’t think so. When it comes to economic policy, often there aren’t clear cut right and wrong decisions. Sometimes, decisions like that are made because the owners just want to protect their own financial interests, but other times they’re made to protect the company so that everyone doesn’t end up losing their jobs.

The issue of abortion, however, isn’t about economic policy. It’s about life, and for the Christian, life is a binary issue. The Bible teaches that God created every human being in the image of God, and therefore, our value doesn’t depend on our contributions to society or to our stage of development. Our value depends on the simple fact that we are *human*. This means that every time conception occurs, a human being comes into existence, a human being with inherent worth because he or she is made in the image of God.

There are massive implications to the biblical concept of the image of God, and one of them is that every time an abortion is conducted, a human being is being murdered. State-sanctioned and state-funded murder is going on all around us in our hospitals, and in abortion clinics. Each abortion costs between $450-$900 of public funds in Ontario, so if we average that out and assume it’s the same cost across the country, then Canada is spending $67.5 million of our tax dollars every year to kill innocent children.

There are many people across the country who are rightly outraged at the prevalence of abortion in Canada. People from diverse backgrounds, from secular humanists to feminists to Catholics, to Jews, to Muslims, have rallied together to speak up against abortion. But sadly, one group is often missing from the pro-life movement that should absolutely be there. Us. Bible-believing, gospel-centered believers like us don’t tend to be involved in political advocacy, or the march for life, or writing articles on the value of life.

Why is that? I think the main reason is that many of us have never been taught about what the Bible says we should be doing about abortion. Every Bible-believing Christian believes that abortion is wrong, but not every Christian believes that God is calling them to do something about it.

I want to do my part in changing that in today’s sermon. We are going to focus on one verse in Proverbs 24, verse 11: “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.” For context, I’d also like to read from verses 1-14.

**Read Proverbs 24:1-14**

The title of this message is **Strength and Strategy for the Cause of Life.** My aim today is to show you that **Wisdom Equips us to Engage our Culture on the Evil of Abortion.**

We will have four points today:

1. Wisdom Acts
2. Wisdom Plans
3. Wisdom Strengthens
4. Wisdom Delights

(1) **WISDOM ACTS**

When you think about “wisdom”, what comes to mind? When popular culture tries to depict a wise person, it often uses the image of the wise old sage who drinks tea all day while living a simple life in solitude. What makes him wise isn’t what he does, but what he knows. Whenever he speaks to people, he gives them some life wise insights that change their lives forever.

These depictions of wisdom essentially characterize wisdom as knowledge. A person becomes wise by *knowing* the right things. Perhaps you have certain people in your life whom you turn to when you need advice and direction. You turn to them because you believe that they will impart some of their wisdom to you that will help you to make a wise decision.

But what about biblical wisdom? Is it any different? Wisdom as knowledge is certainly a huge part of biblical wisdom. The majority of the book of Proverbs contains wise sayings made by King Solomon to his son. Over and over again, Solomon tells his son that if he remembers what his father is teaching him, if he binds them around his neck and writes them on the tablet of his heart, then he also will become a wise man.

But that’s not all there is to biblical wisdom. Wisdom isn’t wisdom if it doesn’t change the way that you live. Mere knowledge isn’t enough to make a person wise. Action must follow the knowledge if someone is to become truly wise. There are examples all over the book of Proverbs that show us the kinds of things that wise people do:

“Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce” (3:9)

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (15:1)

“Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.” (16:20)

And here, in 24:11, we find another example of something that the wise person does. The wise person must “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.”

You may be wondering what this has to do with wisdom. How is it that wisdom requires us to rescue people from being killed? Well, if wisdom is only rooted in making our personal lives better, then it has nothing to do with wisdom. But the reality is that wisdom isn’t ultimately rooted in what it does for us. It’s rooted in what it does for our relationship with God.

Proverbs 9:19 says,

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” (Proverbs 9:19).

This verse tells us that, if we are to become wise people, then we are to become people who live in reverent submission to God. A huge part of fearing the Lord is living under the authority and truth of his will, not ours, which means that what he does, we do. What he doesn’t do, we don’t do. What he loves, we love. What he hates, we hate.

And there is not much that God hates more than the innocent being murdered. That’s what’s happening every time an abortion takes place. An innocent baby is being murdered in the womb. That’s why verse 11 calls us to do something about abortion. If we are called to “Rescue those who are being taken away to death”, then we are called to do whatever we can to rescue the unborn who are being taken away to our hospitals, and to our medical clinics, to die.

Are you willing to obey verse 11? If you’re not, you aren’t living in the fear of the Lord. If you find yourself unmoved by the evils of abortion and unmotivated by verse 11, then you need to pray that the Lord would conform your will to his. This isn’t just about abortion. It’s about your relationship with God. You aren’t truly living for God if you’re not willing to obey him. God wants to work in each of our hearts so that we come to love what he loves, and hate what he hates. God loves human life, and he hates when human life is unjustly taken away.

(2) **WISDOM PLANS**

But what are we to do? Where do we begin? This leads to our second point: wisdom plans.

When we feel emotionally charged about something, our impulse is to just go out and do something, because something is better than nothing isn’t it?

I don’t think so. I think there’s a lot we can do to try to protect the unborn that would do more harm than good. To take an extreme example, pro-life people have threatened to kill abortionists and they’ve bombed abortion clinics, but what good has it done? Absolutely zero. People who do things like that failed to act wisely, because they failed to sit down and think about the implications of their decisions. If they did, they would have recognized that the sanctity of life applies to all people, including abortionists. Every person, whether they are innocent or guilty, is made in the image of God, and therefore, even abortionists are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity.

Wisdom acts, but it also carefully plans. We see that in verses 1-4. In verses 1-2, Solomon tells his son not to be envious of evil men or to even desire to be around them. Why would his son want to do that? It’s because these evil men had found a way to get easy money.

That’s one of the first issues addressed in the book of Proverbs. In Chapter 1, verses 11-14, Solomon writes about these evil men who say this:

“Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason; like Sheol let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse.”

These men had found a quick and easy way to get rich: kill the rich, and steal their goods. Rather than work a lifetime to build up wealth, these men found a way to fill up their houses with plunder by enjoying the fruit of another man’s work.

In other words, these men found a way to enjoy immediate gratification, a temptation for all no doubt, but especially for the young. Solomon’s son would have been tempted to join them so that he too could skip the hard, long work of building up his own wealth by stealing and killing from others.

This is why Solomon says, “Don’t envy them, don’t desire to be with them, because what they’re doing is wrong.” But then, in verses 3-4, Solomon gives his son an alternative. He says, “By *wisdom* a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”

In other words, there’s a foolish way to fill your house, and there’s a wise way to fill your house. The foolish way is to kill and steal from others. Such people may indeed fill their houses with plunder, but one day, they’re going to get their fill of God’s justice. They may be laying traps for others, but in reality they’re laying a trap for themselves.

But the other way to fill your house is to wisely plan for it. If you use wisdom, then according to verses 3-4, you’ll build your house, and your rooms will be filled with “all precious and pleasant riches.” It may take more time for the wise man than it does for the evil schemer, but it will happen.

Notice the various ways this practical wisdom is described in verses 3 and 4. Verse 3 says it is “by understanding” that a house is established, and verse 4 says that it is by “knowledge” that the rooms are filled.” Solomon is describing a careful, deliberate, and informed method of planning that is an essential part of wisdom. This is how he puts it later on in the chapter in verse 27:

“Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.”

Wisdom requires planning, and therefore labouring for the cause of life takes planning as well. In order to *act* to rescue the unborn who are being taken away to death, then we need to *plan*. We need to carefully strategize how we are to best care for the unborn.

What this will look like will depend on the gifts God has given you. Not all of us are strategic thinkers, but all of us have specific gifts that God has given us to do his work in the world. Some of you have been given a gift of mercy. It’s natural for you to care for those who are suffering, and to come alongside people and provide them with practical help. If that describes you, your planning will look very different than the person whom God has given gifts of leadership. A leader will think about how to bring like-minded people together, whereas a person inclined to mercy may make strategic plans on building relationships in order to provide care. Different people will plan differently, but everyone must plan if they are to be wise.

These days, the wisdom of planning has been foolishly neglected. Take evangelism for example. Think about how many more people would hear the gospel and come to church if we just did a little bit of *planning*. Lots of Christians lament the fact that they don’t have many unbelievers in their lives. If that’s the case, then make some plans to meet some! Others talk endlessly about praying for opportunities to share the gospel with people in their lives. That’s good, but that doesn’t excuse you from creating those opportunities with careful planning. We could do so much more with a little bit of planning, but we don’t like it because it’s hard.

Wisdom, however, requires us to plan. Without planning, nothing would ever get done. Churches wouldn’t exist if there were no plans to raise up qualified men to be pastors. Companies that provide jobs for people wouldn’t exist if no one ever made plans to build the company. And the protection of the unborn will never happen if no one ever makes plans to do something about it.

If we are to obey verse 11 and rescue these babies who are being taken away to death, then we need Bible-believing, gospel-centered men and women in places of influence. We need Christian doctors to counsel women who are considering abortion. We need Christian politicians to bring the issue to the public. We need Christian judges who will write truly just decisions. We need Christian businessmen to help provide funding for advocacy work. We need to saturate our culture with the presence of Christ by being in as many places as we can, and the only way this will happen is if we plan.

So if you’re a young person here today, thinking about what you’re going to do with your life, I want you to prayerfully consider how God might use you to protect the unborn in our country. Do you feel that God may be calling you to be a doctor? Then go for it, but as you do, start thinking, praying, and planning about how the Lord could use you to protect the unborn in our country.

The same applies to those who are older and already settled in their work. Take some time to think and pray about how the Lord might use you in the cause of life, and then start making some plans to do something.

The fight against abortion won’t happen automatically, and it won’t happen overnight. It will take deliberate, careful, and patient planning, because that’s what wisdom requires.

(3) **WISDOM STRENGTHENS**

This fight for the cause of life won’t be an easy one, however, and it is one that many who start will not complete. The work will seem futile at times, and there will be much resistance against what we’re trying to do. But wisdom is sufficient for us here as well, because it gives us the strength we need to do the work that God has called us to do. This leads to our third point: wisdom strengthens.

We see that in verse 5: “A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might”. Wisdom not only calls us to action, but gives us the strength to carry out that action. How does that work? There are two ways this works in our text.

The first way is found in verse 6: “for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.” We get strength by doing the very wise thing of seeking wise guidance in this war.

The wise man isn’t full of strength because he has bigger muscles than others or possesses more inner fortitude. The wise man is full of strength because he’s surrounded himself with wise counsellors. These counsellors are helping him know what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. They’re helping him strategize and plan, and then they help him carry out those plans. They may even be helping him see when it’s time to work, and when it’s time to rest.

This should remind us of these powerful words from Ecclesiastes Chapter 4:

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

The two are better than one not because they double the manpower, but because they keep the manpower going. When one runs out of strength and falls, the other is there to pick him up and strengthen him. Without supportive people around us, people who will counsel us, advise us, and strengthen us, we’re not going to last long in this struggle.

The second way that wisdom gives us strength comes from believing the truth in verse 12 that God will hold us accountable for our actions. Let’s follow the flow of thought from verses 10-12. Verse 11 is the command to “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.” Verse 11 is sandwiched between two verses that talk about the failure to obey verse 11. Verse 10 describes the problem, and verse 12 describes the solution.

Verse 10 says that, if you fail to rescue those who are being taken away to death when the day of adversity arrives – maybe because you’re insulted, rejected, or even imprisoned for your pro-life work – then the problem is that “your strength is small.” You’re not strong enough to continue the fight, and since strength comes from wisdom, ultimately you fail to endure because you’re not wise enough.

But then, verse 12 gives us the solution. It gives us an important truth that will give us strength to continue working even in the day of adversity. Verse 12 begins like this: “Behold, we did not know this.” This is an attempt to excuse disobedience to verse 11 by saying, “I didn’t know this was going on”, or “I didn’t know God wanted me to do something about it”. It’s a plea of ignorance.

Then the rest of verse 12 reminds us that, though we may fool ourselves, we can’t fool God: “Does not he (God) who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?” In other words, God knows that our plea of ignorance is false. We know that abortion is going on, we know that it’s evil, and we know that God wants us to do something about it, but instead of doing something about it, we turn a blind eye and blatantly disobey God’s command. Solomon reminds us that when we stand before God to account for what we did in life, we won’t be able to plead ignorance when it comes to abortion. God knows our hearts, and he will hold us accountable for our obedience to verse 11.

This is the truth that our text gives us to help us persevere in the cause of life when the day of adversity arrives. God is watching us, and he will hold us accountable for our works. Think about how much easier it is to work hard and to work long when you know that your boss is watching you. Accountability is a powerful motivator to keep pressing on when times get tough, and it’s no different when it comes to God.

(4) **WISDOM DELIGHTS**

Wisdom acts, wisdom plans, and wisdom strengthens, but there’s one more thing that wisdom does that not only helps us in the cause of life but makes it all worthwhile. This leads to our fourth and final point: wisdom delights.

We see that in verses 13-14 where it says, “My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.” Solomon is encouraging his son to physically eat honey for two reasons: it is good, and it tastes good. Honey has been used since ancient times not only to sweeten food, but to heal wounds. It has antibacterial properties that prevent infection, but unlike other medicine, it actually tastes good as well.

But why does Solomon encourage his son to eat honey? So that he will have an idea of what wisdom does for the soul. Verse 14: “Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.”

We need to take wisdom into our souls just as we take honey into our bodies, because we need it to heal our souls and delight our souls. Our souls have been mortally wounded by sin, and if the wound isn’t treated, then we won’t have a future, and our hope will be cut off. Wisdom is the balm that heals our souls, and it is so sweet, and so tasty, that when we taste it, we want more and more of it.

This is the little sign post in our text that points us to Christ. Wisdom has the power to heal us and delight us because ultimately, it’s not found in words, but in the person of Jesus Christ himself. Christ is both “the power of God and the wisdom of God”, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:24, and in Colossians 2:3, he says that in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

So if we are to grow in wisdom, we must grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ, because all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in him. No wisdom is found apart from knowing Christ. All wisdom is found in him, and in him alone. This is why wisdom has the power to heal and delight our souls.

Jesus healed the wounds of those who trust him by being mortally wounded in our place on the cross, so that we could know him as the wisdom and power of God. He raised our dead hearts to life, so that Christ is like honey to our souls. And now, for those who know him, we want more and more of him, and the more we get of him, the wiser we will become.

This is the promise that awaits all who wisely go about rescuing those who are being taken away to death, and who hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. Fighting for the cause of life will help us grow in wisdom, which means that we will grow in Christ, and there is nothing more delightful than that.

**CONCLUSION**

Ideas to get started:

1. Pray

<https://pccfriends.ca/prayer/>  (prayer link sent weekly by e-mail)

2. Be informed about what is happening at local pregnancy centres:

<https://pccfriends.ca/about/newsletters/>
<https://www.facebook.com/pregnancycarecentre.org/>

3. Donate In kind items

<https://pccfriends.ca/donate-items-for-mom-and-baby/>

4. Take First Response training: <https://pccfriends.ca/campusoutreach/>

5. Host a baby shower, be willing to sponsor moms to attend conferences or special activities your church is hosting, offer a luncheon after church for single moms.

6. Let the local pregnancy center know that you are willing to help moms with their taxes, car maintenance, hair cuts, dentistry, etc.

7. Raise awareness:  post brochures and posters of the pregnancy resource centre in your area at community information boards, transit information boards, community centres.

8. Fundraising

<https://pccfriends.ca/get-involved/fundraising/>

9. Check out other local pregnancy care centers, including the Barrie Pregnancy Centre Kathy Pedersen, the Markham Pregnancy Centre, and the Newmarket TLC Centre

10. Get involved with Pro-Life groups and the March for Life

<https://marchforlife.ca/>