



# The Harvester

*Preparing Souls  
To Serve The Lord!*

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## Conception, Culture, and Christ's Church

Brian R. Kenyon

V. P. Black, a favorite preacher from a few generations ago, would often say in sermons that the most powerful people in the United States were not the President and his cabinet nor any military personnel, but the United States Supreme Court. He would not always give specific examples of why he would say that, but having reflected over the years, it seems at least one major contributor to that assessment was the 1973, *Roe v. Wade*, Supreme Court decision that “unduly restrictive state regulation of abortion is unconstitutional.” The basis of that decision, according to the court, was that laws against abortion “violated a woman’s constitutional right of privacy,” which the court found “implicit in the liberty guarantee of the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (‘...nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law’)” (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Roe-v-Wade>). Obviously, not depriving “any person of life” did not take into account the person’s life inside the womb.

When news broke of the recent “leak” of a document that the United States Supreme Court may overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the panic and mobilization of opposition against such overturning was obvious and instant. Of course, even if *Roe v. Wade* were overturned, it would not make abortion illegal. It would merely allow each State to determine its own abortion laws. Were you old enough in 1973 to remember national sentiment at the news of *Roe v. Wade*? Were you a member of the church in 1973, and if so, did you study Bible lessons or hear sermons on abor-

tion related topics? Many today are not old enough to remember the sentiment in 1973. However, we may still remember how we felt in 2015, when the Supreme Court ruled (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) that same-sex marriages are legitimate and legally binding in the United States and its territories. No matter the feeling toward that, however, it is important to remember that civil law never has or ever will displace God’s law in Deity’s sovereign court.

### Human Conception Results In Human Children

Because legal abortion has been so ingrained in American culture since 1973, people view it as a moral, God-given right. Focus has been on the “woman’s right to choose,” rather than the human life inside her womb. Since God exists and the Bible is His inspired (i.e., God-breathed) word, then whatever the Bible teaches regarding when human life begins is true. Several passages show human pregnancy involves human children inside the wombs of their mothers (Ps. 139:13-16; Eccl. 11:5; Job 3:11-16; Jer. 1:5).

Perhaps the most obvious is a comparison of Luke 1:41, 44 with Luke 2:12, 16. The word “babe [baby, ESV]” is from the Greek word *brephos* (βρεφός), which in Luke 1:41, 44 is used for a child in the womb (i.e., fetus). The same word (*brephos*) is also used in Luke 2:12, 16 for young, or newborn, children. Luke also uses *brephos* in Luke 18:15, where it is translated “infants [babies, NAS95],” and in Acts 7:19, where it is translated “babies [young children, KJV; infants, ESV].” Outside of Luke’s writings, *brephos* is used in

Second Timothy 3:15, where it is translated “childhood [a child, KJV],” and in First Peter 2:2, where it is translated “babes [babies, NAS95; infants, ESV].” A human being is considered in all these situations, whether inside or outside the mother’s womb! No one can rationally argue that a human fetus is not a human life! Yet, because America has been bombarded with the “cultural norm” that it is acceptable to snuff-out human life in the womb for unwanted or crisis pregnancies, there are many who think it is immoral to make laws against on-demand abortions!

## Cultural Norms Are Not Necessarily Biblical Norms

In any area of life, people whose culture indoctrinates them with certain values and then those people construct their day-to-day living based on that indoctrination are going to think differently than people who have not been so influenced by that same culture. A good example is a faithful brother and missionary to Muslims with whom many in the brotherhood are familiar. He was reared in Bagdad. His culture indoctrinated people to hate Americans. Many facets of their society were geared toward perpetuating hatred toward America and its culture. Given those facts, it is easy to see how the average person from Iraq would have a different attitude toward America than the average person, say from Bermuda, or other nations whose culture and practices are American friendly. Thankfully, by God’s grace, this faithful brother

from Iraqi was a deeper and more spiritual thinker than the indoctrination of his culture!

Culture can be both a Scripturally obligatory matter that is temporary as well as a perpetual matter of option. For example, there is nothing inherently sinful about eating meat, for “God created [it] to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good ... if it is received with thanksgiving” (1 Tim. 4:3-5). However, if Christians are in a culture where eating meat is considered participating in idolatry or if eating meat causes another Christian to sin by violating his or her conscience, then eating meat is temporarily sinful (1 Cor. 8:1-13). When new Christians learn God’s word and allow it to transform their lives, their consciences will eventually approve eating meat and/or participating in activities with other faithful Christians (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; 14:1-7).

Cultural norms that are inherently sinful, however, must not be followed or even allowed a place in the Christian’s heart. An experienced missionary once told an FSOP chapel assembly that certain countries in Asia only allowed one child per family. While there is nothing inherently sinful for parents to have only one child, the problem arises when more than one is born. “Law abiding” citizens are called upon to have additional children “euthanized” (which is a polite way of saying murdered) in order to maintain the mandate. Since males are valued more than

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females, and since many parents do not want to directly kill their children, babies are often born in back rooms, unnoticed by authorities. As a result, orphan homes are overrun with girls, who become prime candidates for the sex traffic trade.

It is one thing when a country allows its citizens to commit immoral activities (like America with its legal allowance for fornication, abortions, same sex marriages, etc.), but it is quite another issue when a country (like the one mentioned above) forces its citizens to commit immoral acts. An incidental lesson here is when Christians in America start thinking the “grass is greener” in communist countries or with their philosophies, they need to consider the enforcement of mandates like the one-child-per-family! Christians are not authorized to commit sinful acts, such as murder, in obedience to culture (cf. Acts 5:29; Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17).

## New Testament Principles Transcend Cultural Norms

One big difference between Old Testament Judaism and New Testament Christianity is that Christianity has been declared binding for all people in all ages since its inauguration in Acts 2 (cf. Mt. 28:18-20; Rom. 1:16). Parts of Old Testament Judaism required being in Jerusalem for feasts (cf. Deut. 16:1-6). Judaism also required descendants from Levi to serve in the tabernacle/temple (Ex. 28–29). Since the Old Testament feasts as such are not part of the Gospel, there are no ties to physical Jerusalem. Since all Christians are priests in God’s kingdom (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:5-6), the Levitical system has no binding concern in Christianity (cf. Heb. 7:11-14; 8:7).

The Law of Moses also served as both the civil and religious law for Old Testament Israelites. This can be seen in its laws and regulations for tribal elders (and later kings), as well as religious practices like blood sacrifices, Sabbath days, purification procedures, etc. (Lev. 20; Num. 27). Thus, civil law that was derived from God’s law and passed down was always reliable and binding upon the Jews. Although civil government is from God (Rom. 13:1-5), the New Testament authorizes no exclusive form of government. Rather, it gives principles that when applied make any government more efficient and tolerable for its citizens (cf. Mt. 5:38-48; 7:12). For example, a monarchy is great when the king is living and ruling according to Gospel principles, but when he lives and follows wickedness, the people suffer (Mt. 2:16)!

While Christians have freedom to practice any cultural item that does not violate God’s will (Rom. 14:23; 1 Cor. 9:19-23), they must not be deceived into accepting sinful cultural norms. Government sometimes mandates things it thinks will best serve its citizens. For example, the one-child-per-family mandate mentioned above was probably for population control, which can be good (cf. Jer. 16:1-4). However, no one has a right to murder people for the sake of “population control” (cf. Ex. 1:15-22)! Consider also a person living in first-century Corinth. The city’s reputation through history reveals that fornication was a way of life for a large segment of that population. Thus, citizens would be desensitized to that sin, which attitude could also spill into the church. This is why Paul dealt with that sin quite extensively in his first epistle to them (1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2; 6:18). Cultural norms, whether promoted by civil government or merely allowed, must not be followed when they violate God’s transcendent will!

## Conclusion

An overturning of *Roe v. Wade* would be a step in the right direction (Pr. 14:34), but it will take more than that to turn culture norms toward godly views of human life. The Christian is living among people in high positions who, if they had their way, would increasingly mandate silencing opposition to ungodliness in culture. It seems the older Americans are, the more freedoms they realize have vanished or are in danger of it. While loss of freedom is less than ideal, Christians can still please God with little or no political freedom (cf. 1 Cor. 7:21-23). Christians must continue to undergird themselves with the Gospel. The time may come when the amount of political freedom is contingent on conformity to mandated norms that are sinful (such as being forced to murder, endorse homosexuality, “transgenderism,” etc.). May we maintain such integrity and faithfulness that if persecuted, we would rejoice that we “were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” and that we keep “teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:41-42)!

### “Don’t Say Gay”? — Prayer Update



We have found a qualified and capable person who has verbally agreed to debate George F. Beals, Oct. 27, 2022, on the morality of homosexual behavior. More details to follow. Please pray for this effort to save souls!

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## Fall Registration Opens July 18 at [www.fsop.net](http://www.fsop.net)

**Fall 2022 Semester Begins Aug. 8**

Registration opens July 18 online at [www.fsop.net](http://www.fsop.net). Any of these classes may be taken online for credit or to audit. Contact the office for more details.

Day	Time	Lakeland Classes	Instructor	Credit
Monday	8:30-12:00	1 and 2 Thessalonians and Galatians (137)	Bauer	3
	1:00-4:15	Hermeneutics (100)	Atnip	3
Tuesday	8:30-12:00	World Religions (275)	Wheeler	3
	1:00-4:15	Between the Testaments (220)	Wheeler	3
Wednesday	8:30-12:00	English Grammar (124)	Patterson	3
	8:30-12:00	Greek I (222)	Kenyon	3
	1:00-4:15	Sermon Preparation and Delivery (203)	Patterson	3
Thursday	8:30-12:00	Old Testament History (239)	Kemp	3
	1:00-4:15	Life of Paul (262)	Cantrell	3
Friday	8:30-12:00	Hebrews (210)	Atnip	3
	1:00-4:15	Ezekiel and Daniel (214)	Antemesaris	3
<b>Extension Classes</b>				
Tuesday	7:00-9:30	Restoration History (242) (Wesconnett church of Christ, Jacksonville)	Ridgeway	2.5
Thursday	6:00-8:30	Revelation (259) (Tenth Street church of Christ, Apopka)	Kenyon	2.5

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