Dear Pro-Life Partners | What do you think? | June 1, 2026

While working an event in Grandview, I asked a passerby what she thought of the pro-life/pro-choice conundrum. She explained that she believed that abortion wasn't killing a life until it becomes a sentient being (conscious or able to sense/feel) between 18-22 weeks (she's still researching). Prior to this, she claimed, killing mere human cells would be akin to scraping your knee. (When I addressed the difference between human cells that are *part* of the body and fetal cells that comprise their *own* developing body, she was not impressed.)

After discussing (at length) the complexity of her argument and all my objections to it, I took it in a different direction. If research shows that a fetus isn't "alive" until sentient, i.e. that conscious brain waves signal the start of life between 18-22 weeks, who's to say that further research won't show that it actually happens sooner? (This has happened with fetal heartbeat and fetal pain research.) And if it does, when do we decide that the research is conclusive? This is especially pertinent in light of her response to my remark that, by her own reasoning, someone in a coma isn't sentient, and therefore not alive. "Well we don't know," she said. Exactly. Isn't it easier to concede that a fertilized egg is a living, developing human being rather than perform mental gymnastics to explain it away? (I think many will go to great lengths to justify a moderate stance on an issue just to avoid confrontation.)

At the end of our conversation, she gave me a hug. Seriously. She was thrilled that we could disagree yet still engage in civil, albeit lively, dialogue. I believe this was possible because I asked several questions to truly understand her position and find common ground, when possible.

Kristan Hawkins, President of Students for Life, is in her element on college campuses. One young man brought out the tired a-fetus-isn't-human-until-conscious argument. After some discussion, she likened his view to Peter Singer's findings that a child does not have full consciousness until 3 months *outside t*he womb. So to be consistent, she continued, the young man would need to be okay with killing infants up to this point. After a moment's reflection, he stated, "Yeah, I think I'd be okay with that." Kristan paused, thanked him for his honesty, and moved on to another question (what else is there to say at that point?).

As the young man was walking away, however, he remarked under his breath, "You convinced me." This is interesting because it means that either he shifted to a pro-life position or became even more staunchly pro-choice. It would make sense for him to move from the muddled middle and actually pick a side. Abortion is simply always morally acceptable or always morally wrong (I prefer the latter). All the positions between these two polarities require a leap of faith, faulty logic, or willful ignorance.

Another conversation, compliments of Facebook, was between two AI-generated gentlemen. The first man asserted that abortion is permissible until a fetus is viable–can live outside the womb "on its own." One follow-up question could be, "Well, how do you define 'on its own'?" Isn't this a moving target since advancements in medical science continue and are keeping premature infants alive earlier and earlier. Regardless, even the healthiest and most intelligent newborns among us cannot survive long on their own outside the womb.

The second man, however, took a slightly different approach. Rather than arguing the dignity of dependent life, he drew a parallel to demonstrate the absurdity of the claim due to the logical consistency of human response, from preborn to adulthood. He explained that if someone took a presumably perfectly-viable adult and dumped him in the ocean sans life raft, he would not survive long because he would be *out of his natural environment*. For the unborn, the womb is the natural environment until gestation is complete. A child's humanity does not begin with an introduction to dry land; it's just promoted to a new home. Expecting any child to survive unprepared and unsupported would be like throwing an adult overboard. We can't all be Jonah.

Partnering with You for Life!
Linda Verhulst, MRL-WR