

The Value of Life: Price or Priceless?

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” This quote, taken from the Genesis 1:27, states that every human who has ever lived, or will ever live, has been created in God’s image. In this respect all mankind is unique from animals: he is the sole creation which has been made in the image of God. As such, man has an intrinsic value higher than any other creature on earth. But exactly how valuable is man? Can a price tag be affixed to a human life? If so, what makes one person more valuable than another? The answer is that man cannot have a monetary value placed on him, for he is priceless, worth so much that God would send His only Son to die for man, that man might live forever with Him.

In May of 2008, the Environmental Protection Agency placed the “value of a statistical life” at 6.9 million dollars.¹ This number was designed to show the cumulative amount that 1 million people would each pay on average to reduce their risk of death by 1 in 1,000,000. Thus, each person on average would be willing to pay \$6.90. The purpose of this scale was to determine if a proposed project was worth the cost, for if an improvement statistically decreases the rate of fatality by 1 in 100,000, it would be valued at approximately \$69,000,000. Anything above this amount is not worth spending, since the increased safety does not merit the additional cost.

If a statistical life is worth 6.9 million dollars, how does one provide recompense for loss of life? September 11, 2001 is a day which will live in infamy for most Americans. That day, several thousand people lost their lives as a result of the terrorist attacks. Resulting was a response by the national government which provided compensation to every victim’s family. Kenneth Feinberg was the attorney appointed to

determine the amount of compensation to be paid.² Kenneth was required by law to affix a monetary value to every fatality, with a greater amount of emolument being delivered to families of CEO's, bankers, and stock brokers than to families of firemen, students on tours, or maintenance staff. This job proved difficult for him and throughout the project increasingly conflicted with his growing belief that all life is equal. He completed the compensation program on a graduated scale, however, and was later again appointed to provide compensation amounts to families of Virginia Tech students, after the shooting there. This time however, he stated, "I believe that all lives should be treated the same." As a result, equal amounts of compensation were provided for all the victims, no matter who they were. All their lives were equally valuable.

Biblically, all life is equal in God's sight. The unborn, poverty stricken, or infirm are as worthy of life as graduates of Ivy League colleges, CEO's of huge corporations, or extremely rich. This also applies in criminal cases, whoever murdered a man was himself then to be put to death, regardless of whether he was rich or poor this according to several verses, including Deuteronomy 19:21 "And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

Christians are to value everyone's life as equal in worth. The Corinthian believers were rebuked for favoring a rich visitor over a poor one. According to the Bible, God is not a respecter of persons, for God is the one in control. As well, a special charge is given to Christians to care for the widows and fatherless-those who need protection and assistance most. This command carries a principle along with the obvious responsibility that Christians are to care for and aid those who need help. God has said that He will not forget to punish those who take advantage of orphans and widows. How much less will

He forget those who would murder unborn children or elderly patients? Since every human has equal value, equal protection must be given to every life. Just as one would despise a law condoning murder, one should also fight against laws which make, or would make, abortion or euthanasia legal.

Laws killing innocent people do exist. These most harmed are also those who are least able to do anything about their situation. That is why those who are thus disabled most assuredly require our protection. As Genesis 1:27 states, every man is made in the image of God. This sets him apart from every other living creation, for man has a soul. Numerous corporations and organizations exist with the specific purpose to protect endangered species and to prevent animals from becoming endangered. Such great care is spent, and so large an amount of money is given for their protection, that it is ironic that such little care is given for the protection and preservation of human life, whether it is an unborn child, an elderly patient in a hospital, or a disabled person. Christians need to fight against such a travesty.

One of the rallying words behind numerous revolutions and reform movements throughout history has been equality, no man is above another due to birth, nationality, or color. Yet equal rights are not given to all. Every human life is priceless, and every human life is equal. Christians must be the ones who have the loudest voice in this world, crying out for those who are unable to do so for themselves. Without recognizing that all, whether unborn, average, or elderly, are equal and priceless, prejudice will still exist, and the greatest form of discrimination around will continue to destroy the defenseless.

¹ Borenstein, Seth, *Environmental Economics* Associated Press, 2008

² Feinberg, Kenneth, *What Is The Value Of A Human Life?*, National Public Radio, 2008