

Bioethics

Why the study of bioethics can aid in pro-life work

by *Mikaela N. Hills, MA*

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Mauck & Baker's *TLC v. Elgin* pro-life victory in January 2014 and the pending opinion to be issued by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* and *Conestoga Wood Specialties Corp. v. Sebelius* illustrate how technological advancements in science and medicine are at a crossroads. Becoming familiar with bioethics may equip pro-life advocates to comprehend the ethical questions which arise at the intersection of life sciences, medicine, politics, law and philosophy. Understanding the ethical issues of these interactions will help an individual appreciate the reasons why we respect the dignity and inherent value of each human life.

Awareness of ethical questions arising prior to birth, during the course of a person's life, and at the end of a person's life, are complicated matters which are not necessarily black and white. Appreciating the knowledge of the fields which provide ethical reasoning should help guide individuals when they choose to make a decision on how they intend to respect the inherent value of a human being.

Specific technological advancements in science and medicine may function in one of two ways: they may assist in respecting the inherent value of each person, or such advancements may consequentially assign a cost to each life which may only be worth preserving to a specific point in time.

The use of 3D ultrasound imaging, for example, provides high definition images of the life of a human fetus, a person, growing inside a woman's womb. This specific technological advancement shows detailed images of the fetus including his or her arms, feet, and toes. The complexity of such images illustrate that the fetus is a person, to continue on his or her trajectory of development inside the womb. In the absence



of 3D ultrasound imaging, it may be more difficult for a woman to respect the inherent value of the baby growing inside her.

Bioethics can be applied to day-to-day situations such as counseling young married couples on available reproductive and family planning alternatives, providing surgical options for human enhancement to otherwise physically capable or disabled persons, or promoting each person to prepare their living wills and advance directives indicating any extraordinary measures they desire prior to their natural death.

In the absence of these bioethical discussions, we foster the growth of a vulnerable society, which is unaware or indifferent to how technological advancements change our understanding of these issues. Researching bioethics can provide a wealth of information to advocates in the professions of education, law, leadership, management, and in the ministry, who seek to make logical decisions to respect the inherent value of each life. Such advocates can then better respond to questions which arise in the lives of those they know or to engage in public discussions of policy and law. Mauck & Baker's victory for *TLC* increasingly portrays how advocates who respect the inherent value of all persons continue to seek to bring about the greater good in society. ■