

WHY CAN'T WE LOVE THEM BOTH?

John and Barbara Willke

MY MESSAGE TONIGHT is not what I said five or ten years ago.ⁱ Five or ten years ago my emphasis would have been on the right to life and on saving babies. But now I want to tell those who are involved in women's helping centers that they are doing what I believe is the most important single thing that the pro-life movement is doing in our time. The big problem is that we have not publicized it enough—it's a light hidden under a bushel—and so my message will be very direct. We've got to go out and sing from the housetops about what we're doing—how compassionate we are to women, how we are helping women—not just babies, but also women. Let me develop this point by going back to the beginning.

Barbara and I were already involved before *Roe v. Wade*. We had written *Handbook on Abortion* two years before the Supreme Court decision, and by 1973 it was in ten languages worldwide and had sold over a million copies. But when the Supreme Court decision came down, the pro-life movement began. What were we going to do about this problem? I remember the first meeting we had in my own Cincinnati, less than a month after that court decision. We had a city councilman speak and in the course of his remarks he said, "Well, now you've got to get right down to the precinct and start to work." "Pardon me, sir," a lady asked, "but what's a precinct?" That's where we were back then, 25 years ago.

I think that now we all know what a precinct is. But most folks started literally from ground zero. Everyone was completely shocked and surprised by the decision. There were a few experienced people. We had our share of leaders who came forward at the beginning. We had some excellent lawyers, physician, clergymen—but mostly we were used car salesmen and housewives and butchers and dry-cleaners and teachers and plain, ordinary folks.

I guess Barb and I had a leg up on some. She had been a professor of nursing and headed her department at a college of nursing. I had been doing obstetrics for a long time and had already delivered a few thousand babies. Perhaps we even had it in our blood a little bit, for both of us have

siblings who are college professors. We had begun to lecture and teach in the late 1950's, giving pre-Cana marriage-preparation courses. We had written our first book in 1964 about sex education for small children. By the time the abortion issue came along, we were experienced lecturers and had been speaking before large groups in major cities for a decade. In any case, we were among those who sat down and asked what we were going to do about this. Well, it was obvious that we had a *massive* educational job ahead of us. So we looked over the scene and asked what were the arguments that *they* have made that have carried the day, that have influenced the Court to make this decision.

There seemed to be two basic arguments, as we saw them. One was: "It's not a baby yet, just a ball of cells" or "It's not a baby at all" or "It isn't a baby yet" or "It isn't human" or "It isn't alive"—you know that story. We clearly had to answer that one. The second major argument was: "Well, it's only a Catholic issue." That argument has changed over the years to become: "It's only a religious issue" (or, in many areas of the country now, "It's only a Baptist issue," or "an Evangelical issue"). But the only people really standing up out front at the beginning were Catholics. I might add as a postscript (when I speak to Evangelical audiences, I always mention this point) that I think that we have never give due credit to *the* major organization in those early years that stood up and was a major bulwark defending the unborn—the single most important organization was the Knights of Columbus—thank you, guys! For this I usually get a hand from Evangelical audiences, for they know this, and they're quick to show their thanks. I then proceed to explain that, as the 1970's wore on, we had some major Evangelical leaders come forward—Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Francis Shafer, C. Everett Koop (our former Surgeon General), and others. They stood up to tell their confreres that this was not only a Catholic issue. Rather, it was a very real Christian issue in the broadest sense, and they knew that they needed to come out from within their church walls and go into the marketplace, or the whole nation was going down the tubes. By the time Reagan was elected, they were standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Catholics and have continued to grow in numbers and influence ever since.

But let's go back to the two questions. How do you answer those two

questions, the two that convinced the Court? The first one we answered scientifically, biologically, medically. Like others who had been on the speaking circuit, Barb and I had never used pictures or slides, but at that point we quickly assembled a series of accurate, scientific pictures of the developmental phases of a fetal baby, and we started using them in our lectures: “Here is a developing baby at six weeks.... Here is one at eight weeks...” and so on up the time-line. “Here’s a premature baby at 20 weeks.” The set of slides we put together caught on like wild-fire. If you travel the world, you’ll hear about Willke slides. Overseas it’s almost a generic term. What these slides did was to tell the audience, through scientifically accurate photographs, that this is in fact a living human being from the first cell stage and that biologically there is really no question about this.

We elaborated the point: “This is when we have recorded the first brain waves, at six weeks.... Here is when we detect the first heartbeat, at three weeks....” And so we taught, by pointing out that here is this and here is that. As the years went on and many of you became involved in this project, this first question became *the* central core question that the pro-life movement spoke of and answered. We were certainly helped immensely by ultrasound, by fetoscopy, and by all the other brilliant diagnostic medical advances that have been developed in the last decade or two. If somebody in a debate before a college audience were now to say, “Well, we don’t know when human life begins,” we would get a titter through the audience. What rock did the person who said that crawl out from under? Is that Rip Van Winkle? In Washington we would say that “it wouldn’t pass the smile test.” It’s such a stupid comment that people smile at it. For today to say that you don’t know when human life begins is either to demonstrate that you’re ignorant or that you’re lying, because everybody knows when human life begins.

A couple of weeks ago Barbara was at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where she also spoke at a high school. Both groups gave her the same reaction. When she asked, “How many of you have seen a picture of an unborn baby on ultrasound?”, one-third of the kids apparently had seen a still picture from a sister or an aunt or someone who had been in for an ultrasound test while they were pregnant. Barbara then asked, “How many

of you have heard the heartbeat of an unborn baby?” Over half of those in the audience had heard the heartbeat. And so, with the help of technology over the years, and with the help of all of you, we have succeeded in answering the first question. All the pro-aborts can now say is, “Well, yes, it is a living human, but a woman has a right to do it anyway.” In any case, the first question has been answered.

Let’s talk about the second point: “It’s only a Catholic issue” or “only a religious issue.” Well, this question was devastating. If we make it a religious question, and only a religious question, there will be one person who will say, “Hey, I’m a Catholic, and I believe what my church teaches—this is human life, and it’s wrong to abort.” But there will also be someone who says, “Well, I’m something else, and I think it’s okay to do abortions, and that’s my religious belief.” The second would say to the first: “We’re not going to impose our morality on you. You act according to your belief, but don’t impose your morality on us. Both of us can then believe and act according to our own beliefs.” This is the whole dimension of “choice”—neither should impose his morality upon the other. If we make it only a religious question, we lose.

And so, for at least the first decade, whenever we’d have a debate or a panel discussion, they would always want a priest up there and in uniform (collar and everything) because if they could get a Catholic priest up there, they were halfway home before anybody opened their mouths. Of course, we would at least try to get a minister up there. But, of course, that wasn’t the answer either because it was still seen as a religious issue.

What was our answer to that? Our answer tended to follow the answer we gave to the first question: “Is it human life?” *Yes*. “From conception?” *Yes*. “Therefore, it’s human from the beginning?” *Yes*. Since these are humans, this is a human rights issue. (That’s the term used in Europe. Here we call it a *civil* rights issue.)

Now, 30 years ago—not too long after Martin Luther King and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of the 1960’s—friends of Dr. King would come to him when he was agitating on behalf of equal rights for minorities and say “Look, Dr. King, we’re with you. We understand the problem of segregation of black people, and we think that there should be equality and equal opportunity. We’re with you, but, look, you can’t impose this by

law. You have to change minds and hearts. This is a change that must come, but it will only come slowly, through education, witness, and so on.”

King had an answer for that. He said, “I know a law cannot make you love me, but a law can prevent you from lynching me.” For many of you, this may be the first time you’ve heard his comment, but that was not true 30 years ago. Many remembered it in the years just after that, and so we often quoted Dr. King. It had not been that long since the Congress had passed the Civil Rights Act. Since they did make *laws* to protect civil rights, we said, “Since this is a civil rights issue, we can and should make a law to protect the civil rights of the unborn.” In short, we’re still working on the answer to the second question, but we’ve come a long way.

Let’s sum up. What was the effect of our method of teaching back then? In retrospect, it was spectacularly successful. If you were a raw audience who came to one of our lectures back then and if we were given an hour with you, we’d spend 30 minutes proving that this is a kid, and then we’d spend the other 30 minutes partly on civil rights and partly talking to you about abortion and its social consequences. If we were effective and if you were reasonably receptive, the overwhelming majority of the audience would walk out the door saying, “Yep, they laid it on the table. That is a baby. Yes, abortion kills a baby, and that’s wrong. Therefore, *we must stop abortions.*” It sounds like a very simple intellectual equation: convince the audience that this is a baby, convince them that this is killing, and that it is not just a religious issue, and they will walk out concluding that we had to stop abortion.

Using that method of education, we slowly began (and always this “we” is being used corporately here) to convert a nation. We were slowly becoming successful. And then something changed. I had been President of National Right to Life for ten years. I was probably in a better position to observe this change than most other people, and I’m a slow learner, but it did slowly sink in. This was the end of Reagan’s time and the beginning of Bush’s term.

There was a meeting in New York in the late 1980’s, called by Bill Moran, who was then head of New York Planned Parenthood. He called together all of his fellow-travelers. We have been told that the whole abortion industry was there: the National Abortion Rights Action League

(NARAL), the National Organization of Women, the YWCA, the Women's Political Caucus, the various professional abortion groups, the American Civil Liberties Union, and all the rest. They were all there. Moran told them that they were in big trouble, that in his eight years in office Reagan had appointed two-fifths of all federal judges, and that now it was Bush's turn. Bush was popular, and he might get a second term. If so, that would be eight more years, and another two-fifths of the federal judiciary could be replaced by anti-abortion types. "Never forget," he said, "the federal judiciary has given us everything we have today, and they have guaranteed for us the right to abortion. But if the federal judiciary, which has been our friend, is replaced by those who are anti-abortion, the judges could take from us what they have given us." They knew that they "had" the support of over 90% of the media, almost 100% of the major foundations, most of academia, and much of the government. All of these were sympathetic to the cause, but he noted that this issue had never had majority support among the grassroots people of America. If they lost the judges and did not have support in the grassroots, the pro-abortion cause would lose. What to do? They didn't know the answer, but they did know that they had to find out if there was a way to influence the grassroots. And so they went for it. They got the best Madison Avenue types, they used focus groups, polling, market-testing, and other sophisticated techniques.

We know that NARAL alone anted up \$500,000. Apparently the others also gave large sums. The research took two years. To put it briefly, the answer consisted of three suggestions. Suggestion #1: never talk about what's inside of the woman. Well, they never did so if they could help it. They knew that if they argued whether or not this was a baby, the pro-life side would win.

Suggestion #2: quit talking about abortion. Quit talking about abortion? Yes! You see, *they* (that is, *us!*) have framed the question before the American public. The question is: "Is abortion right or wrong?" They were told that when the argument is about whether abortion is right or wrong, the pro-life people win. So the advice was to quite arguing about whether abortion is right or wrong. Just don't talk about abortion at all.

Suggestion #3: change the question. Instead of arguing whether abortion

is right or wrong, the advice was to change the question and move the debate to a question about women's rights: "Does a woman have the right to have an abortion?" Label it a matter of *choice*. Call yourselves *pro-choice*. Emphasize that the government should stay out of this very private matter. Keep repeating that the woman's right to choose is a greater right than the fetus's right to live. "Change the question."

Here's how this hit me. I was debating Faye Wattleton on a national talk show. The moderator asked her a question. She smiled and said, "Oh, that's a good question, but before I answer it, let's be very clear. The real question here—the central, the only important question—is this: does a woman have the right to choose? And should we or should we not keep the government out of this very private matter? Okay, now your question."

And then she answered the question. In fifteen minutes we heard that same comment two more times. This happened again when I faced Kate Michelman, and then Pat Ireland, and then others. I'm a slow learner, but something began to penetrate my thick head. They've changed their line. They were all doing it. I didn't realize how devastating it would be, but devastating it was.

As an example, let's look at Tom Harkin, Senator from Iowa. Some of you may remember that Roger Jepsen, the incumbent, had been involved in a scandal. Harkin was a congressman when he ran for that seat. Harkin had a pro-abortion voting record, but in the election he held himself out as being pro-life. I can still see the full-page ad: Tom with his wife and handsome children, and in the background a Catholic church. He was going to do everything he could to stop abortion. He ran on a pro-life platform. He won. That was in 1984. He continued to vote pro-abortion. When he was up for re-election in 1990, he ran on a pro-abortion platform, accepted money from the pro-abortion groups, and spoke at their meetings and conventions. This time he ran as "pro-choice" and was re-elected. If he had done that in 1984, he would have had no chance of winning. He did it in 1990 and he won, and he won again in 1996. My point is that something happened during those years.

Back when Reagan was finishing his second term, we had a twenty-to-thirty-vote pro-life margin in the U.S. House of Representatives. By the time Bush finished his term, we had a twenty-vote deficit. Something

happened to our politicians during those years. What happened was that the pro-aborts had changed the question. I tried to keep track of this. My guess was that they must have spent as much as \$50 million. Think of 12 full-page ads, the best that Madison Avenue can give you, in *The New York Times*, at \$80,000 a pop. Multiply the cost of these ads by running them in almost every paper in the United States, for that's what happened.

As an example of such an ad, here was a picture of a well-dressed lady—she could have been a debutante—with the proper jewelry and everything, looking out through some bars. She's in jail because of those anti-choice laws. There was another one of Jesse Helms in bed in the middle between a handsome husband and wife—Washington invading your privacy—this sort of stuff. Clever, good, effective. And you know what? At least for people in politics, they did change the question. They also changed it for many people in the United States.

What had happened was that many of the politicians getting this barrage of propaganda came to the conclusion that we had pulled the tail of the pro-abortion tiger once too often and that the tide of pro-choice was going to sweep everything before it. Being convinced of this, the mugwumps jumped. A mugwump is a species of political bird who sits on the fence with his mug on one side and his wump on the other. Wherever the wind blows is where the mugwump jumps.

I was finishing ten years as President of National Right to Life. Barbara and I finally had an empty nest, and I was tired of commuting every week. But I started to see clearly what was happening about the time I was leaving. For a variety of reasons I knew that National Right to Life wasn't in a position to do what was needed. So, after I left office, I went from one organization to another—by this time I knew everybody in the movement, of course. Let's take just one example. Tom Glessner was head of the Christian Action Council (now called CareNet). Then it was still a viable lobbying group. Tom and I had been good friends. I spent some time with him and went over all of this, as I saw it. I said, "Tom, you're a good one. You're Evangelical, you're developing crisis pregnancy centers out there—can't you take this on?" "Oh, Jack," he said, "we have too tight a budget. We just let somebody go. I can't begin to do it here," he said, "you do it." Then I went to Concerned Women for America, to those dear

friends of ours, the LaHayes, and talked to Beverly. I said, “You’re the perfect one to do so. You’re a woman’s group.” “Oh,” she said, “Jack, look, we’re doing this and that, and our budget’s such and such. You do it.”

I went from Catholic leaders to the head of the Southern Baptists and to others, but I kept getting the same answer. I finally got the message. Somebody upstairs was telling me that if I didn’t do it, it wouldn’t get done. So I started Life Issues Institute. And, almost miraculously, within the very first few months, I had two checks (one requested and one absolutely unexpected) that totaled \$175,000. What I then did was what they had done. I began with polling, then moved on to focus groups and discussion groups, and then to designs, market-testing, and so on. Let me reduce this to two questions. The answers were startling.

We asked, “Do you have an opinion on abortion?” If they said, “Yes, I’m pro-life,” we said, “Thank you for your cooperation, but we can’t use you.”

If they said that they were pro-choice, “Thank you for your cooperation, but we can’t use you.” These were each about 25% of the total. The balance, some 50%, answered, “Well, I really haven’t made up my mind yet.” We used to call these undecided people “the mushy middle.” Now we call them “the conflicted middle.”

The “conflicted middle” did not really like abortion. They really did not think that it ought to happen and they would not want their daughters to have one. But if she said that she had a right to do it, this group reluctantly said, “Yes, she has that right.” The one thing that came through as an absolute was that both sides thought that adoption was the greatest thing since sliced bread. But, of course, Planned Parenthood has been dumping on adoption all these many years, and it is not a very popular option today for young ladies.

But, in any case, the point was that the general public was not listening to us anymore. We were at an impasse. Our challenge was: “How do we get them to listen? We don’t lose debates on points, but how do we get them to listen?” And so we went back to work—more research and more time. Let me condense this part of the story.

We have had a little triumvirate in Cincinnati for many years now. We do most of the thinking at Life Issues Institute. Market-testing was through

Cincinnati Right to Life. My dear Barbara has been their volunteer Executive Director for 27 years. It is the largest city Right to Life group in the world. It has published 80,000 newsletters a month for the last 25 years and it puts out a lot of other educational material. First we did the design, then Barbara printed and did the market-testing. For instance, in the Cincinnati area she tested 25 different billboards on the theme we were working on until we came to the right one.

Much of the problem boiled down to what *they* thought about *us*. You see, they thought we were violent, that we shot abortionists, that we burned down clinics. And, furthermore, we weren't compassionate to women. They really didn't think that we were too well educated. We were mostly kookie religious zealots, and we weren't compassionate to women. Everything we touched was colored by that same "we weren't compassionate to women." Everything. It finally got through our thick heads that this was why the barrier had gone up. They weren't listening to us because they didn't think we were compassionate to women. It's like what Bush told me after I spent thirty minutes trying to convince him to drop his rape exception. He said, "Well, Doc, you're probably right. I can't answer your arguments. You've got it all there, but I'm going to keep my position." Why? "I guess the best I can say is some kind of gut compassion for women." He stayed with that position.

But that was echoed again and again. We were not compassionate to women. My heavens! Look what's out there! We have almost 4,000 pregnancy help centers in the United States. We've only got 3,000 Right to Life chapters and groups. So we have more offices dedicated to helping the women than we have offices dedicated to stop the killing. And who staffs them? Well, go to the typical crisis pregnancy center of Birthright. They are 98% female. Yes, they may have a male treasurer, and every now and then they'll let a man do something else. But this is a woman's world.

Let's take a Right to Life group. We've got 25 members on the board of Cincinnati Right to Life, and three-fourths are women. I still represent Ohio on the board of National Right to Life—it is three-fourths women. Anywhere in the country you go, it's the same. If you take that sex-ratio and put these huge pieces together, we see that 80% of the activists in the pro-life movement in the United States are female. And a majority of the

hours expended in the United States by the pro-life female is spent helping women! A minority of our time is spent trying to stop the killing.

And we're not compassionate to women? That's the centerpiece of our movement. That's what I meant when I started by telling you that you who staff the pregnancy centers are the cutting edge of the pro-life effort in our time. But this has been absolutely a very well-kept secret. Nobody knows it. And so we decided that our job was to brag about it, to get up and tell people about this. We then came up with a slogan and used it as the title of our new book this past year. It is *Why Can't We Love Them Both*. We also made a slide-set and a video with the same title. Cincinnati Right to Life has made this slogan available commercially on bumper strips, pin-on buttons, paper stickers, parade posters, and full-size billboards. This theme was tested through Cincinnati Right to Life. Now we finally have an effective answer. And so for the best answer today, when they say, "But a woman has a right to choose..." we suggest that you say, "But why can't we love them both?"

If I leave you with one thing tonight, let me say this. When we talk about the baby and killing, we win. When we talk about a woman's choice, we lose. They have even changed their title. They're pro-choice—we're anti-choice. Don't help them change the question, please. Every time you call them "pro-choice," you help them change the question and you help them kill babies. And I'm sure that's the last thing you want to do. So if you walk out of here with any resolution at all, please *never again call them pro-choice*. Call them pro-abortion, but don't ever call them pro-choice again.

Let me give you one example of how this is effective. Barbara and I have a rather unique situation at the University of Cincinnati. As a large public university, it has some 35,000 day students. A professor there called us up about 15 years ago. He was part of a prominent Jewish family that helped Planned Parenthood. He was agnostic and pro-abortion. He said, "Doctor, I have a rather unique class at the University—900 students and everyone gets a B. Nobody flunks if they just behave themselves. Class attendance is compulsory." He has it in a big auditorium, as you might guess. The students are not necessarily from church choirs. It's a snap course—they get a good grade. They just have to be there and behave themselves

because he's a tough disciplinarian. If he's walking down the aisle and somebody makes a noise behind him, he'll spin around, point to that student, and say "You, what's your number? 385? Out!" And they're out. So they behave themselves.

His aim is to teach them public speaking and how to sell ideas in the public arena. He said, "I hear that you and your wife are very effective in presenting your case. I'd like you to speak. I'll give you a full hour. You can use anything you want to—slides, movies, whatever. Do your damn'dest. Planned Parenthood will be here next week." And so he gave us free time in front of 900 students. We have repeated this class for the last 15 years. Just as a sideline, Barbara asked a generous donor to pay for a handbook on abortion for each student. That's been done every year since, and I'm sure it has saved many babies.

This lecture has given us a platform that kept repeating each year. Through it we were able to try out certain ideas on the students. We were always fairly effective. After all, we have been lecturing for 40 years, and one does gain a certain ability to do this sort of thing. We were always able to hold their attention. They always took the books. Then about four years ago, Barbara and I looked at each other over the supper table the night after this class and agreed, "That was a difficult class." We blamed it on the kids.

We thought that this was just a different class. There had been some rumbling. The questions were sharper, and some of them were angry questions. We answered the rape question and got an "Oooo." After that lecture Barbara and I looked at each other and said, "Boy, that was a bummer of a class!" We blamed them. But the same thing began to happen elsewhere too. The next year was a little bit worse. Finally, after more of this, we got the picture—it was us.

Here's the structure we had been using. We began with slides of the number of abortions and live births. Then for thirty minutes, using slides, we proved that this was a living human from the first cell stage. After this we discussed and showed discrimination on the basis of race (the holocaust), skin color (slavery), disability (fetal malformation), and compared discrimination in these cases to discrimination in regard to "place of residence and age" (abortion). Then successively we met and

answered the social questions regarding rape, back alley abortions, unwanted pregnancy, choice, population, imposition of morality, and so on. We then showed and explained the types of abortion. Barbara finished by offering them a wallet-sized card listing pregnancy help centers, offered our book, and so on, and then moved on to questions.

But this presentation was not working the way it used to work. We were right in the middle of our research at that point, and so we put the results of our research to use. The following year we made a change. Here's what we did. Barbara started with five minutes of telling them how compassionate we are to women. "We understand the agony of her decision. We stand *with* her, not against her. We want to help her. We really don't think that there is such a thing as a convenience abortion. This is a painful thing for any woman at any time. We think it's time to discuss compassionate alternatives like adoption. Why can't we love them both?

Then we told them how many abortions there were. *Then* we proved it was a baby. *Then* we went through the social questions. We spent more time on choice. We cut back on discussing abortion, showing the abortion pictures only briefly. At the end Barbara took five minutes explaining post-abortion syndrome and how it affects a woman. When she was done, I spent the last five minutes telling them how they could help such a woman. I detailed the steps of treatment and the fact that most doctors don't have time or don't know enough to help her properly. I was specific in saying that you, her roommate, her sister, or her friend are the one who can do the most. I outlined the steps for getting rid of the denial and bringing it to the surface, and then going through a grieving process. Even if she is not churched, we found out that she needs to accept Divine forgiveness. The next step, for those who can, is forgiving others, and finally the most difficult step—to forgive herself. I explained how those listening could help her go through these stages and how, at every stage, it takes time, it takes *your* shoulder, it takes *your* sharing some tears with her, *your* prayers with her.

Then we passed out the little wallet card with crisis pregnancy addresses and asked for questions. There were only two and it was over. The prof came up to us excited. He said, "Willke's, did you see what happened? Not a single girl asked a question. They took the books and filed out like

out of a funeral home.” Since then we have repeated this numerous times, and we keep getting the same result.

The difference in what we are doing now is that we start by telling them that *we* are the compassionate ones. There are almost 4,000 pregnancy help centers. There are only 3,000 Right to Life chapters. The pregnancy centers are staffed over 95% by women. Some 80% of the total personnel in this movement are women, and well over half of the total effort expended in this movement is expended in helping women. People are absolutely blown away by this. They come up afterwards and say, “Wow, I never knew you liked women. That’s amazing! Why haven’t we been told this?”

All right, how do *you* apply this? You’re a preacher? Start with compassion to women, forgiveness by God, to the women there. You’re at a home-and-garden show and you start to talk with some of the other women. It used to be that we’d advise you to start with “Yes, but do you know that’s killing babies? Do you know there’s a heartbeat at...?” Stop! Don’t start that way now. Now you want to start by saying, “You know, one of the things that’s not really known is how compassionate the....” Now when they come back and say, “Yes, but a woman should have the right to choose,” you say, “But why can’t we love them both?” They have had a one-liner, but now you’ve got one.

Let us leave you with something *very* important. If you remember *nothing* else you’ve heard here, remember this: when we argue whether it’s a baby, we win. When we argue on choice, we tend to lose. So please, *never again call them pro-choice*. Every time you do, you help them to change the question, and you help kill babies. Obviously, that’s the last thing you want to do. So *never again call them pro-choice*.

Finally, let me answer the “choice” question specifically. A woman says that she has the right to choose. What is her choice? Well, she *is* pregnant.

Left alone, in a number of months she’s going to have a baby. So what is her choice? Her only choice is how the baby is coming out—alive or dead, crying or in pieces. And so the right to choose is a right to choose to kill your own offspring. This is one way of answering the question.

Let’s try another answer. Here’s a group of young men. They’ve just formed a new organization. The title of it is The Right to Rape Club. We

hear about this and we ask, “How can you justify this?” They say, “Well, really, the paramount question here, the central and only question, is who has the right to choose. We fellows think we have the right to choose to rape women, and we think we ought to keep the government out of this very private matter. Furthermore, we think we ought to appropriate some tax money to build hygienic centers where we can rape them safe and legal.” Now let the audience pause just a moment and think, how are they going to respond to that? They’ll be a bit incredulous at first and then reply “But rape is *wrong!*” Note the sequence of this thinking here. They guys said *the* central question was the right to choose to rape, and you said “but rape is wrong.”

Let’s substitute bank robbing. If they think that they have a right to choose to rob banks, you respond “But robbing banks is wrong.” Try driving a hundred miles an hour down Main Street, and then try having an abortion. In any morally laden human action, the first question is not “Who’s allowed to do it?” but “Is the action permissible?” Only then do you get to the second question, which is “Who is allowed to choose to do it?” Sometimes, when you structure the argument this way, the lights really go on for some people. They say, “Golly, I never thought of it that way.” So this is another way to answer the “choice” question.

Let me finish with a comment from Richard John Neuhaus, a great civil rights activist from years ago who has remained very prominent over the years. Here’s what he said as he finished a talk not so long ago:

So long as we have the gift of life, we must protect the gift of life. So long as it is threatened, so long must it be defended. This is the time to brace ourselves for the long term. We are laying the groundwork, the foundations for the pro-life movement of the 21st Century. Pray that the foundations are firm, for we have not yet seen the full fury of the storm that is upon us.

But we have not the right and not the reason to despair, if we understand that our entire struggle is premised—not upon a victory to *be* achieved, but a victory that has *been* achieved. If we understand that, far from despair, we have the right and reason to rejoice that we are called at such a time as this—a time of testing, a time of truth. The encroaching culture of death shall *not* prevail, for we know that the Light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness shall not overcome it. The darkness will never overcome that Light.

NOTES

i. This paper was given by Dr. John and Mrs. Barbara Willke together, speaking from a single microphone. But the continuing back-and-forth dialogue of the presentation made it extremely difficult to transcribe. Accordingly, the diction has been changed by the Willke's to read as a first-person address even though the actual presentation was thoroughly a "team-effort."