

# No More Rambling Monologues!

## How to Organize Your Next Pro-Life Talk

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By Scott Klusendorf

Good public speakers are not born. They are organized.

Without question, their effectiveness can be traced to one common denominator: Before taking the microphone, they hone their talks to a razor sharp focus. As a result, their actual presentations are always memorable. Whether you're a seasoned professional or a petrified novice, you can WOW your audiences with a well-organized talk. Before your next (or first) speaking event on abortion, here's how to transform your rambling monologue into an engaging, memorable presentation.

### **Three essential questions to ask before moving your lips:**

#### **Question #1: Who is my audience?**

Failure to ask this question can result in disaster. A presentation titled, "What the Bible Says About Abortion" that earned rave reviews from your Sunday school class will go down in flames if offered to a philosophy class at UCLA. If your audience is composed of junior high church kids, a rambling monologue on the theme, "The Theological Case for the Existence of Fetal Personhood based on the Hebrew Documents" (yawn) might not work as well as a talk titled, "How Christian Teens Can Help Stop the Killing."

Questions to consider when evaluating your audience:

- Will my audience be composed primarily of pro-lifers, abortion advocates or those in the mushy middle?
- Will my audience be mostly Christian? If so, how likely is it to think that morals are real things and that truth is objective rather than subjective?
- What prior teaching has my audience had on this issue? (If you can't find out, assume it's had little.)
- What, if anything, is this group doing to stop abortion?
- What is the average age of the audience? Will it be composed mostly of teens, collegians, singles, or married couples?

#### **Question #2: What goal should I have for each audience?**

- *Hostile audiences:* Goal--neutralize them. You may not convert a hard-core abortion-advocate to your point of view, but you can neutralize him. Graphic visual aids such as "Harder Truth" tend to shake the cock-sure arrogance of most abortion advocates.

It forces them to defend killing unborn human beings (rather than talking about "choice") and that terrifies them. When talking to a largely pro-abortion audience, attack the very foundation of their position with hard-hitting questions like “If the unborn are not human, why not create fetuses solely for research purposes?” and “Should we anesthetize a human fetus prior to an abortion procedure to ease the pain of dismemberment?”

- *Mixed audiences:* Goal--convert people who claim to be neutral. If you are like me, you probably have friends who say things like, "I'm personally opposed to abortion, but I wouldn't want to force my views on anyone else." We need to expose this line of thinking as vacuous. Imagine, for example, someone saying, "I'm personally opposed to sexual harassment, but I don't think we should take that choice away from the men of this country." Or, "I'm personally opposed to slavery, but if you want to own a slave, I won't force my morality on you." People who argue this way are pro-abortion by default. Most of them have heard nothing but pro-abortion cliches all of their lives. When people say they are “personally opposed” to abortion, but think it should remain legal anyway, I borrow a tactic from Greg Koukl and ask, “Why are you personally opposed?” The reply is always the same: “I’m opposed to abortion because it kills a baby.” (That’s the only response one can offer—after all, if abortion does not take the life of a human being, why be opposed at all?) To which I reply, “May I repeat back what you just said to me? You say you oppose abortion because it kills a baby, but you think it should be legal to kill babies?” The response is telling: “Gee, I’ve never thought of it that way. It doesn’t sound so pretty once you take the spin off it.” The good news is that tactics like this, coupled with hard-hitting pro-life presentations, can persuade many of these folks to reconsider the truly relevant facts.
- *Friendly audiences:* Goal--activate converts. Gregg Cunningham observes that the vast majority of pro-life Christians who say they believe that elective abortion unjustly kills a defenseless human being are not lifting a finger to stop it. We need to move these people from *attitudinal* opposition to abortion to *behavioral* opposition to abortion. We do this by breaking their hearts and creating a sense of outrage that in turn inspires sacrificial changes in behavior. It's difficult to break hearts, however, without showing people abortion. That’s why graphic depictions of abortion, used properly, are indispensable tools. (More on this later.)

### **Question #3: What are the particulars?**

Before you go speak, make sure you nail down the specifics:

- How much time do I have to speak? (Fail to ask this question and you’ll be frantically reorganizing your talk five minutes before you take the stage—ouch!)
- Will anyone else be speaking? If so, who? And how much time does he or she get? Will you speak first or last?
- Have I been asked to speak on a specific aspect of abortion?
- Is a large screen video monitor available for showing the “Harder Truth” video?

## How to organize material for a compelling pro-life presentation<sup>1</sup>

### Step #1: Brainstorm for ideas!

The best way to do this is to grab a cup of coffee (or go for a jog) to get the mental juices flowing. Then, start scribbling your random thoughts on a sheet of paper. Ask yourself, "What do I want my audience to know about abortion when I am finished speaking?" What tools of thought do I want them to get from my talk? Ultimately, you want to establish the humanity of the unborn child and the inhumanity of the abortion act, but what facts and arguments can you bring to meet this objective? What lies and distortions about abortion have you recently heard or seen in the media? Which of these has you fit to be tied? If you were a newscaster and had 40 minutes to clear up these lies, what would you say to your hearers? What new facts and insights about abortion are you eager to pass along? What do you want people to do about what they see and hear in your presentation? Asking these types of questions will stimulate your thinking. Do not worry about organizing all of your thoughts at this time. Rather, your goal should be a sheet of paper covered with random feelings and ideas about abortion. No idea should be rejected just yet. Keep your pen moving!

### Step #2: Choose a central theme

This involves reducing your random ideas on abortion down to a single aspect or theme. The theme should be brief and is usually expressed in a simple phrase. Here are some examples (though many others could suffice):

- Abortion and Secular Teens
- Abortion and Politics
- Abortion and the Church
- Abortion and Theology
- Abortion: Lies and Distortions
- Abortion and Moral Reasoning
- Abortion and RU 486
- Abortion and Fetal Pain
- Abortion and Pro-Life Debate Tactics
- Abortion and Christian Teens
- Abortion and Pro-Life Persuasion
- Abortion and the Death of Humanness

It is, of course, permissible to discuss several key facts about abortion as long as you have a single unifying theme. But be careful you don't drift aimlessly trying to cover too many ideas at once. It's better to have a razor-sharp focus than a broad, dull one.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted here to Ken Davis and his fine book, *How to Speak to Youth and Keep them Awake at the Same Time* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986). Though I have modified Ken's principles to suit my own needs as a pro-life speaker, the basic methodology described here was developed from his book.

### Step #3: Write a clear propositional statement (or thesis)

Now it's time for the most important step. You must determine exactly what you hope to communicate with your presentation. Ask yourself, "What do I want to accomplish with this talk? What point do I want to drive home with my audience? What actions do I want people to take as the result of hearing my talk? The process of asking these types of questions is tedious, but you must tolerate it if you want to move on to the next step--writing a propositional statement. A propositional statement (or thesis) is a single sentence that describes the thesis or purpose of your talk. It should neatly summarize the point of your presentation in clear and concise terms. Be prepared to invest some time pounding this out. Remember what they teach good preachers to do in seminary: "Say one thing and say it well!" (This is why you should *never* prepare at the last minute—start at least two weeks ahead, if possible.)

The following are two possible propositional statements for the theme, "Abortion and Christian Teens":

"Christian teens *can* help stop the killing"

"Christian teens *should* help stop the killing"

Notice that the first statement is an *enabling* one--its focus will be to tell Christian teens *how* to help stop the killing. The second, meanwhile, is an *obligatory* one--its focus will be *why* Christian teens should work to stop the killing. You must decide what type of speech you want. Once that is done you can begin formulating the *rationale* for your propositional statement, the main points that will support it.

### Step #4: Develop the rationale for your propositional statement

Let's take, for example, the propositional statement above: "Christian teens can help stop the killing." Obviously, you have chosen an enabling focus for your presentation, which means the main points of your talk should tell students *how* they can help stop the killing. These main points are the rationale for your propositional statement. The following is an example of the above propositional statement complete with the rationale (i.e. main points) that could be used to support it:

"Christian teens can help stop the killing."

Possible supporting rationale (i.e., *how* Christian teens can help stop the killing):

- 1) By simplifying the abortion debate for their friends
- 2) By making a persuasive case for the humanity of the unborn
- 3) By using graphic visual aids wisely
- 3) By confronting moral relativism
- 4) By helping a friend with a crisis pregnancy
- 5) By taking a courageous stand for the unborn on campus

Notice that we now have a rough outline for a presentation, complete with a clearly stated objective and a summary of our main points (rationale). Although we still need to fill in the many details that will make for interesting content, our presentation already has focus. It will not drift aimlessly because it has a point.

Now you are ready to buttress each of your main points with facts and arguments. What studies can you cite to back up your main points? Is there an illustration or anecdote that can enhance a given point?" Why is the pro-abortion rhetoric so often heard on this point flawed or fallacious? Since in this case you are talking to a Christian group, what Scripture references can you cite in support of your facts? What practical steps should Christian teens take to carry out each of these points? Questions like this will add spice to your presentation and help provide the hard-hitting content you need to make it effective.

In one sense, you could think of the above process as posing a question to your audience and then answering it with your main points: "Young people, tonight I want to address the question, "What can you do, as Christian students, to help stop the killing? I want to show you five specific steps you can take to make a real difference right now where you live."

Here's another example involving Embryo Stem Cell Research (ESCR). Your preliminary outline could look like this:

- Theme: ESCR and Intellectual Honesty
- Propositional Statement (thesis): "The case for ESCR is intellectually dishonest."
- Supporting Rationale (which answers the question why the case for ESCR is intellectually dishonest):
  - 1) It pits science against faith in a manner that distorts both
  - 2) It assumes that human beings are defined by their parts, not essence
  - 3) It confuses intrinsic human value with instrumental human value
  - 4) It ignores important moral considerations
  - 5) It downplays ethical alternatives to ESCR that don't involve killing one human being so that another may benefit.

Again, notice that we now have a skeleton structure for our talk. All that remains is filling in the relevant details that will make each of our points memorable.

### **To Review:**

Your presentation will have a razor-sharp focus if you:

- Brainstorm for ideas
- Choose a specific, central theme
- Write a clear, razor-sharp propositional statement (thesis)
- Support your propositional statement with rationale

Sample speaking outline:

## In His Image: A Biblical Foundation for Human Value

Text: Genesis 1: 26-27, 9:6.

Cross References: James 3:9, Exodus 23: 7

- I. **Introduction:** Lessons from 10 year old at the emergency room-- “Dad, that lady has no legs, but she’s still a valuable human being.”
- II. **Theme:** What makes human beings valuable? Do embryos and fetuses count? And who decides? Make no mistake. Today we stand before two possible futures based on two radically different views of humanity. One view says that human beings are intrinsically valuable simply because they are human. According to this view, your rights do not depend on what you can do or your level of achievement. The other view asserts that human beings are merely instrumentally valuable, meaning they are mere carriers of what is valuable, most notably consciousness, intelligence, and the like. On this view, you are not fully human until you acquire certain arbitrarily selected properties.
- III. **Significance:** The debate over the question, “What makes humans valuable?” not only impacts disputes over cloning, abortion, and embryo research, but our evangelistic approach. If human beings are nothing more than a collection of physical parts absent a soul, there can be no sin, no after life, no eternal judgment, and no need of a savior. Humans are just cosmic junk.
  - A. The debate over human value has raged in our culture for over 200 years:
    1. **Abraham Lincoln** (“Philosophical Fragment”): Any argument used to dehumanize slaves works equally well to dehumanize Whites. The moment you advance the principle that humans have value only because of some acquired property (like skin color or intelligence) rather than in virtue of the kind of thing they are, you not only dehumanize your assigned victim class, but all humans.
    2. **Peter Singer** (“Practical Ethics”): Any argument used to dehumanize the fetus disqualifies newborns as well. In other words, there is no relevant difference between fetus and newborn: Neither one has acquired self-consciousness, hence, neither is valuable. At least he’s consistent. He recognizes that once you advance the principle that human beings have no intrinsic worth, there is no basis for protecting newborns or fetuses. Singer further contends that a variety of non-human animals are rational, self-conscious beings that qualify as persons in the relevant sense of the term. Consequently, dogs, cats, and dolphins are valuable persons, while fetuses, newborns, and victims of Alzheimer’s disease are not. As for the doctrine of the “sanctity of human life,” it is nothing but “speciesism,” an irrational prejudice rooted in outdated religious traditions (i.e. Christianity).
    3. **Senator Tom Harkin** (debating cloning for Embryonic Stem Cell Research): The embryos in question are smaller than a dot and resemble a goldfish. Principle: because these embryos are small and don’t look like us, we may chop them up for research.
  - B. What’s next, Computers as persons? Paul Churchland: When computers can function at the same level as humans, only a racial Bigot will deny them rights as persons.
- IV. **Thesis:** Though critics say the Bible is silent on issues like abortion and cloning, Christians can bring moral clarity to these issues by asking three foundational questions:
  - A. What does the Bible teach about human value? (Ebay “Family Sale” story)

1. It's intrinsic not instrumental: Humans have transcendent value because they are made in God's image. (Genesis 1: 26-27; James 3:9)
2. Because humans have intrinsic value, the shedding of innocent blood is strictly forbidden. (Exodus 23:7; Matthew 5:21)

B. What does the Bible teach about the unborn?

1. Answer: There is little direct teaching on the subject, but this should not trouble us. We can still logically infer that elective abortion and research cloning are moral wrongs.
2. The alleged silence of Scripture on these matters does not make them permissible. The Biblical writers were most likely silent because prohibitions were completely unnecessary. Unlike the surrounding pagan cultures, Hebrews and early Christians were not killing their unborn offspring.
3. Our case is simple and does not require direct Biblical teaching: If the unborn are human beings, commands against shedding innocent blood would apply to the unborn as they do other children and adults.

C. Hence, the question: What is the unborn? The answer to that question brings moral clarity.

1. **Science:** The unborn are distinct, living human organisms. Human parents can only produce human offspring (biogenesis). This fact is beyond dispute.
2. **Philosophy:** There is no essential difference between the embryo you once were and the adult you are today. (SLED test). If humans have value only because of some acquired property like self-awareness, it follows that since this acquired property comes in varying degrees, basic human rights come in varying degrees. Theologically, it's far more reasonable to argue that although humans differ immensely in their respective degrees of development, they are nonetheless equal because they share a common human nature made in the image of God.
3. **Theological conclusion:** Given what we know scientifically and philosophically, we can logically conclude that the unborn are valuable human beings who bear God's image. Therefore, elective abortion and destructive embryo research are morally wrong.
4. **The Post-modern challenge:** "There is no truth!" How do we reach a relativistic culture that thinks moral truth is a preference, like choosing ice-cream? Answer: Reawaken moral sensibilities by graciously offering people a chance to see abortion. Use graphic visuals wisely: A) Disclose contents, B) Stress forgiveness, restoration, refer to CPC.
5. **Emmett Till story:** It's time for Christians to open the casket on abortion, lovingly.

V. **General Conclusion:** What is our responsibility as Christians on abortion and embryo research?

A. **Love your unborn neighbor** as a fellow human being. Biblically understood, "love" is not a feeling but a behavior:

1. John 14: 23-24—"He who loves Me obeys my teaching."
2. 1 John 3: 18—"Love not with words but with deeds."
3. Luke 10: The Good Samaritan not only felt pity for the beating victim, he took pity on the beating victim. The measure of how much we care about this issue will not be found in the piety of our rhetoric, but in how much we are willing to sacrifice personally to stop the killing. Volunteer at your local pro-life pregnancy center. Support local RTL groups.

B. **Equip yourself to engage** (1 Peter 3: 15; Jude 3)! Be ready to persuasively defend a Biblical worldview on abortion and research cloning. Visit [www.prolifetraining.com](http://www.prolifetraining.com) for free help making your case with friends and coworkers. Look for these articles:

1. How to Defend Your Pro-Life Beliefs in 5 Minutes or Less
2. Dead Silence: Must the Bible say that Abortion is Wrong?

Don't Get Caught with Nothing to Say!

## **Equip yourself to engage!**

### **Seminar: “Pro-Life 101--Making Abortion Unthinkable”**

Do you have pro-life beliefs, but feel tongue-tied when talking to friends, co-workers, and classmates? Tired of hearing that you shouldn't force your morality on others? Then this seminar is just for you! Yes, it's true: Pro-life views are under attack from all sides as dangerous and intolerant, and millions of Americans have absorbed that view. But you can still make a compelling, yet gracious defense for the lives of the unborn in the midst of a secular culture. And you can do it even if your friends and classmates reject Scripture as a source of authority. In this seminar, you'll learn how the pro-life view can compete in the marketplace of ideas once it's properly understood and properly articulated.

Benefits you get from this seminar:

**Clarity:** You'll learn to simplify the abortion issue by asking the one question that trumps all others. No more abortion distortions!

**Competence:** You'll learn to make a compelling scientific and philosophic case for the pro-life position, and you'll do it without using Bible verses!

**Confidence:** Worried about those tough questions? Worry no more. You'll learn to persuasively answer the five most common objections raised by abortion advocates.

This is Scott's most popular seminar, the same one he teaches to students at Focus on the Family Institute (3xs yearly) and to pregnancy care staff and volunteers nationwide.

*YOU TOTALLY made an astounding difference to my life and my ability to argue so persuasively against abortion. And as a result of the amazing training you provide, I have been able to share the pro-life message numerous times over to other people, young and old! I will never forget that “Pro-Life 101” seminar.*

**Stephanie Gray**, student, University of British Columbia 1998-2001

*Scott Klusendorf is excellent. I've heard many speakers who deliver outstanding content, but few who can actually equip people to communicate their pro-life convictions to a secular culture.*

**Chuck Colson**, Prison Fellowship Ministries

Call right now to have Scott teach this seminar at your church or pro-life event

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