

The Sanctity of Life, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 6: The Shedding of Innocent Blood: The Question of Abortion

Proverbs 6:16–19

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson brings the foundations laid in Lessons 1, 3, and 4 to bear on the question of abortion. The image of God, God's forming and knowing of the child in the womb, and the personhood of the unborn together establish that unborn human life is genuinely human life, made in God's image. Proverbs 6:16–19 names "hands that shed innocent blood" among the things the Lord hates; Exodus 21:22–25 shows the law protecting the unborn; Psalm 106:37–38 records God's grief over the sacrifice of children. The teacher's task is to present the biblical case for the protection of unborn life clearly and convictionally.

What makes this lesson uniquely weighty is its pastoral dimension. Many in any class will carry private wounds: women who have had abortions, men who encouraged or pressured them, parents and others touched by this grief. The aim is to name the sin honestly while making the gospel of forgiveness and restoration in Christ just as clear, so that no penitent heart is left in despair. Avoid graphic description, and avoid partisan political language entirely. Keep the focus on Scripture, conscience, and grace. This is not a political rally but a study of God's Word, conducted in love.

Formationally, the lesson aims to form in students both deep conviction and deep compassion. They should leave more committed to the protection of unborn life and more equipped to be agents of grace and truth toward the wounded. The goal is not to win an argument or to assign blame, but to align the student's heart with God's, who both hates the shedding of innocent blood and delights to forgive the penitent. Teach this lesson on your knees, with great tenderness, trusting the Spirit to do what only He can do in tender places.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read Proverbs 6:16–19. Among the things the Lord hates are "hands that shed innocent blood." What does it tell us about God's heart that the shedding of innocent blood is named among the things He most detests, and how does this reveal His regard for the defenseless?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the striking fact that Proverbs gives us a short list of things the Lord positively hates, even calls an abomination, and that "hands that shed innocent blood" stands among them. This is not a peripheral concern of God but something His heart detests. The list reveals God's character and His values.

Help the class see what this says about God's regard for the defenseless. Innocent blood is, by definition, the blood of those who have done nothing to deserve harm, the most vulnerable and the least able to protect themselves. God's hatred of its shedding is the flip side of His love for the helpless. He is the defender of those who cannot defend themselves.

Set the tone carefully. This is strong language, and it is God's, not ours. But the point is not to wield it as a weapon against people; it is to reveal the heart of God, who treasures life. Teach the verse as a window into God's love for the vulnerable, which is the deepest reason this lesson matters.

Connect this to the foundations already laid. The shedding of innocent blood is grave precisely because human life bears God's image and is His gift. God's hatred of it is consistent with everything the study has established about the worth of human life. Let the class feel the seriousness without yet rushing to application; that will come.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The shedding of innocent blood named among the things the Lord hates (Proverbs 6:16–17).
- God's hatred of injustice as the flip side of His love for the defenseless.
- God as the defender of those who cannot defend themselves.
- The gravity of shedding innocent blood grounded in the image of God and the gift of life.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it reveal about God that He hates the shedding of innocent blood?
- How is God's hatred of this sin connected to His love for the vulnerable?
- Why must this strong language be handled as a revelation of God's heart, not a weapon?

Question 2

Student Question:

It is easy to read a list of sins God hates and quietly exempt ourselves. As you consider this passage, where do you sense God inviting you to honesty rather than self-justification about your own attitudes toward the vulnerable and the unborn?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This first self-examining question gently turns the passage inward. There is a natural temptation, when reading a list of sins God hates, to picture other people and feel safe ourselves. The question invites honesty instead, asking where God may be calling each student to self-examination rather than self-justification.

Help the class apply this broadly and humbly. The sin of devaluing the vulnerable is not confined to one act; it can live in our indifference to the unborn, our hardness toward struggling mothers,

our willingness to look away from injustice. Honesty before God means letting the passage search us, not just others.

Be careful to keep this from becoming either self-flagellation or evasion. The aim is the honest, humble posture that says, "Search me, O God," trusting that God exposes sin in order to forgive and heal it, not to condemn the penitent. This honesty is the soil in which both conviction and grace can grow.

Move toward a posture of humility for the whole lesson. Invite students to set aside defensiveness and to come before God with open hearts. The lesson will say hard and tender things; a humble, honest heart is needed to receive both rightly.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to exempt ourselves when reading of sins God hates.
- Honest self-examination before God rather than self-justification (Psalm 139:23-24).
- The many forms of devaluing the vulnerable, including indifference and hardness.
- God's exposure of sin as aimed at forgiveness and healing for the penitent.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it tempting to exempt ourselves when we read of sins God hates?
- Where might God be calling you to honesty rather than self-justification?
- How does a humble heart prepare us to receive both truth and grace?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read Exodus 21:22-25. The law attaches serious consequences to harm done to a pregnant woman and her unborn child. How does this passage show that God's law regarded the life in the womb as a life to be protected, not as a thing of no account?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Turn to Exodus 21:22-25, a passage in the law dealing with harm done when men who are fighting strike a pregnant woman. The law attaches serious consequences to such harm, applying the principle of life for life, eye for eye, when injury results. The details have been debated, but the thrust is clear: harm to a pregnant woman and her child is treated with great seriousness.

Help the class see the underlying valuation. In the surrounding cultures, the unborn and the newly born were often regarded as expendable. The law of God stands apart, treating the life in the womb as a life to be protected, with real penalties for those who cause it harm. This reflects the same high regard for life the whole Bible expresses.

Handle the interpretive question honestly but briefly. Some translations and interpreters read the passage as distinguishing degrees of harm; others read it as applying full penalties to the loss of the child. Without getting lost in technicalities, the teacher can note that on any reading, the passage shows the law protecting the unborn rather than dismissing them as of no account.

Draw the line to the present. If God's law in Israel surrounded the unborn with legal protection, this confirms the consistent biblical witness that the life in the womb matters to God. Combined with Genesis, Psalm 139, and Luke 1, it strengthens the case that unborn human life is to be protected, not destroyed.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's law attaching serious consequences to harm done to mother and unborn child (Exodus 21:22–25).
- The contrast with surrounding cultures that treated the unborn as expendable.
- The unborn regarded by the law as a life to be protected, not dismissed.
- Consistency with the wider biblical witness to the worth of life in the womb.

Discussion Prompts

- How does this passage show God's law protecting the unborn?
- What does the contrast with surrounding cultures reveal about God's values?
- How does this passage fit with Genesis 1, Psalm 139, and Luke 1?

Question 4

Student Question:

Whatever your own history with these questions, the gospel speaks first of grace. If you carry guilt or grief connected to this subject, how does it affect you to hear that there is full forgiveness and cleansing in Christ for every sin brought to Him in repentance?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question deliberately interrupts the building case to speak grace, and the placement is intentional and pastoral. Before the heaviest convictional material, the class hears clearly that the gospel speaks first of grace, and that there is full forgiveness in Christ for every sin brought to Him in repentance.

Speak this tenderly and without qualification for the penitent. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. There is no sin connected to this subject, or any other, that places a repentant person beyond the reach of God's mercy. For the one carrying guilt, this is the word they most need to hear, and they need to hear it as true.

Be faithful to the gospel as this church understands it, without the language this study excludes. Forgiveness comes through the blood of Christ, received by a penitent, obedient faith. For the

Christian who has fallen into or been wounded by this sin, the way back is confession and repentance, walking again in the light, where the blood of Jesus keeps cleansing (1 John 1:7–9). Do not offer a cheap or magic forgiveness, but a real one, grounded in the cross and received by genuine repentance.

Let this question minister, not merely inform. Some in the class may be hearing, for the first time, that their deepest grief can be washed clean. Give space for that. The aim is that no penitent heart leaves this lesson in despair, but rather lifts its eyes to a Savior whose grace is greater than its sin.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gospel speaking first of grace: full forgiveness in Christ for the penitent (1 John 1:7–9).
- No sin placing a repentant person beyond the reach of God's mercy.
- Forgiveness grounded in the blood of Christ, received by penitent, obedient faith.
- Real forgiveness through repentance, neither cheap nor out of reach.

Discussion Prompts

- How does it affect you to hear that there is full forgiveness in Christ for every sin?
- Why is it important to speak grace clearly, and not only conviction?
- What is the difference between a cheap forgiveness and the real forgiveness of the gospel?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read Psalm 106:37–38, which laments the shedding of “innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters.” How does Scripture’s grief over the sacrifice of children illumine the seriousness of taking innocent unborn life today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Turn to Psalm 106:37–38, part of a sober recital of Israel's sins, which laments that they shed “innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters,” sacrificing them to idols, and that the land was polluted with blood. Scripture grieves deeply over the destruction of children.

Help the class feel the weight of this lament. The sacrifice of children was among the gravest evils Israel fell into, and Scripture recoils from it with horror and sorrow. God's heart breaks over the shedding of the innocent blood of the young. This grief is instructive for how we should regard the taking of innocent unborn life today.

Draw the parallel with care and without sensationalism. The point is not to equate every situation or to heap condemnation, but to recognize that Scripture takes the destruction of children with utmost seriousness and grief. A culture that destroys its young, in whatever form, stands under the same sorrowful gaze of God.

Keep the tone of lament rather than denunciation. The fitting response to this passage is grief, the same grief God feels, joined with intercession and a renewed commitment to protect the vulnerable. Lead the class to mourn what God mourns, and to let that grief deepen their reverence for the lives of the young.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Scripture's grief over the shedding of the innocent blood of children (Psalm 106:37–38).
- The sacrifice of children as among the gravest evils Scripture records.
- God's sorrow over the destruction of the young as instructive for today.
- Lament and intercession as the fitting response, rather than mere denunciation.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Scripture's grief over the sacrifice of children speak to us today?
- Why is lament a fitting response to this passage?
- How can grief over what God grieves deepen our reverence for the young?

Question 6

Student Question:

Our culture often frames this issue in terms of rights and politics. How might God be calling you to think and speak about it instead in terms of Scripture, conscience, and compassion, with both conviction and gentleness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question addresses how we think and speak about this issue. Our culture frames it almost entirely in terms of rights and politics, and believers can absorb that framing, becoming combatants in a political war rather than disciples shaped by Scripture. The question calls for a different frame: Scripture, conscience, and compassion.

Help the class see the difference. A political frame tends toward slogans, sides, and contempt for opponents. A scriptural frame begins with God's revealed regard for life, addresses the conscience rather than scoring points, and is marked by compassion for everyone touched by the issue, including those who disagree and those who are wounded.

Be explicit about avoiding partisanship, as this study requires. The conviction about the worth of unborn life is grounded in Scripture, not in any political party, candidate, or movement. Believers may differ on prudential and political questions; the call here is to ground our convictions in God's Word and to speak with both truth and gentleness, not partisan heat.

Move toward changed speech and thought. Invite students to examine whether their own way of thinking and speaking about this issue has been shaped more by political culture or by

Scripture, and to commit to the harder, better way: conviction held with compassion, truth spoken in love.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The difference between a political frame and a scriptural frame for this issue.
- Grounding conviction in Scripture and conscience rather than partisan identity.
- Compassion for all touched by the issue, including opponents and the wounded.
- Truth spoken in love, against slogans and contempt (Ephesians 4:15).

Discussion Prompts

- How does a political frame differ from a scriptural frame for this issue?
- Why does this study refuse to align with any political party or movement?
- How can you speak about this issue with both conviction and gentleness?

Question 7

Student Question:

The same God who hates the shedding of innocent blood is rich in mercy to the penitent. Why is it essential that we hold together both the seriousness of this sin and the fullness of God's forgiveness, and what goes wrong when we lose either one?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the central pastoral balance of the lesson: holding together the seriousness of the sin and the fullness of God's forgiveness. The same God who hates the shedding of innocent blood is rich in mercy to the penitent. Both are true, and both must be held.

Show what goes wrong when we lose either one. Lose the seriousness, and we become careless about the worth of life and offer a forgiveness that costs nothing and means nothing. Lose the forgiveness, and we crush the wounded under a weight Christ came to lift, driving the guilty to despair rather than to grace. Either error betrays the gospel.

Anchor the balance in the cross. At Calvary, God neither ignored sin nor abandoned sinners. He bore the full weight of sin in His Son so that the guilty could be forgiven. The cross is where the seriousness of sin and the fullness of mercy meet. A church that holds both is simply standing where the cross stands.

Apply this to the class's own attitudes. Invite students to examine whether they tend to drift toward harshness or toward laxity, and to ask God to form in them the same balance He holds: unflinching about the worth of life, and overflowing with mercy toward the penitent. This balance is the heart of the lesson.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Holding together the seriousness of sin and the fullness of God's forgiveness.
- The dangers of losing either: careless laxity or crushing condemnation.
- The cross as the place where the gravity of sin and the depth of mercy meet.
- The call to mirror God's balance: unflinching truth and overflowing grace.

Discussion Prompts

- Why must we hold together the seriousness of this sin and the fullness of forgiveness?
- What goes wrong when we lose either one?
- How does the cross hold both together perfectly?

Question 8

Student Question:

Think of the women and men in any congregation who may carry private wounds connected to abortion. How is God calling you to be an agent of His grace and truth toward them, rather than a source of further condemnation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question turns the class outward toward the wounded among them. In any congregation there are women and men carrying private grief connected to abortion. The question asks how each student can be an agent of God's grace and truth toward them, rather than a source of further condemnation.

Help the class see their calling. The church is meant to be a place of refuge for the broken, not a courtroom. This does not mean hiding the truth, but it means embodying the grace of the gospel: gentleness, confidentiality, a refusal to gossip or judge, a readiness to point the wounded to the Savior who forgives.

Be concrete about what grace looks like. It may mean guarding our speech so that we never speak of this sin in ways that wound the silent sufferer in the room. It may mean being a safe person to whom someone could one day tell their story. It may mean praying for and supporting struggling mothers and post-abortive believers.

Press toward a posture, not just an action. Invite students to become people in whom truth and grace are so joined that a wounded person would feel safe near them. Ask each to consider how their words and demeanor either invite the hurting toward grace or drive them deeper into hiding.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church as a refuge for the broken, embodying the grace of the gospel.

- Truth held without becoming a source of condemnation for the wounded.
- Guarded speech, confidentiality, and compassion toward silent sufferers.
- Becoming a safe person who points the hurting to the forgiving Savior.

Discussion Prompts

- How can you be an agent of grace and truth toward the wounded?
- How might your speech either wound or welcome the silent sufferer?
- What would make you a safe person for someone carrying this grief?

Question 9

Student Question:

Trace the biblical case for the protection of unborn life: the image of God (Genesis 1), God's forming and knowing of the child in the womb (Psalm 139), the personhood of the unborn (Luke 1), and the Lord's hatred of shedding innocent blood (Proverbs 6). What does this teaching, taken together, lead us to conclude about the taking of innocent unborn life, and how do we hold this conviction together with the gospel of full forgiveness for the penitent?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block, gathering the entire biblical case. Trace it for the class: the image of God in every person (Genesis 1), God's forming and knowing of the child in the womb (Psalm 139), the personhood of the unborn shown in the unborn John and the unborn Christ (Luke 1), and the Lord's hatred of shedding innocent blood (Proverbs 6), confirmed by the law's protection of the unborn (Exodus 21) and Scripture's grief over the destruction of children (Psalm 106).

State the conclusion clearly and convictionally, as the study requires. Taken together, this teaching leads to the conclusion that the unborn child is a human being made in God's image, and that the deliberate taking of innocent unborn life is a grave wrong, the shedding of innocent blood that God hates. The study does not flinch from this, because love does not lie.

Immediately and with equal clarity, hold this together with the gospel. The same passage and the same God who name this sin also offer full forgiveness to the penitent through the blood of Christ. The conclusion about the sanctity of unborn life is not a verdict of despair over anyone; it is a call to align with God's heart, which both grieves the loss of innocent life and runs to forgive the returning sinner. Name the sin honestly; make the grace just as plain.

Guide the teacher to land this with the utmost pastoral care. Speak slowly here. Make sure that every person carrying guilt hears, unmistakably, that there is mercy for them in Christ, and that every person hears the call to revere and protect unborn life. Avoid graphic or partisan language. The aim is a class that leaves both more committed to the protection of life and more amazed at the grace that forgives even this. Truth and grace together, as they meet at the cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The cumulative biblical case for the protection of unborn life (Genesis 1; Psalm 139; Luke 1; Proverbs 6).
- The deliberate taking of innocent unborn life as a grave wrong before God.
- Full forgiveness in Christ for the penitent, held together with the conviction (1 John 1:7–9).
- The conviction as a call to align with God's heart, not a verdict of despair.
- Honest naming of sin and clear proclamation of grace, avoiding graphic or partisan language.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the whole biblical witness lead to a conviction about unborn life?
- How do we state this conviction clearly while making grace just as clear?
- Why is it essential that no penitent heart leaves this lesson in despair?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over this lesson. Name one specific way God is shaping your heart toward both the truth about the sanctity of unborn life and the grace of the gospel, and one concrete step you will take this week to live and speak in a way that reflects both truth and grace.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question gathers the lesson and asks for a personal response that holds both truth and grace. The aim is not a political position or a heavier conscience, but a heart increasingly shaped like God's: reverent toward unborn life and overflowing with mercy.

Press for one specific way God is shaping the student's heart. For one it may be a deepened conviction about the worth of the unborn; for another, the lifting of a long-carried guilt as they grasp the gospel; for another, a new compassion for the wounded or for struggling mothers. Ask them to name it.

Then ask for one concrete step that reflects both truth and grace. This might be supporting a ministry to mothers in crisis, speaking about this issue with new gentleness, becoming a safe person for the hurting, repenting and receiving forgiveness, or interceding for the vulnerable. The step should embody the lesson's union of conviction and compassion.

Close at the cross, where the lesson has been heading all along. The innocent blood of Christ was shed so that the guilty might be cleansed. Send the class home both more committed to the sanctity of unborn life and more astonished at the grace that washes even the gravest sin white as snow. Truth and grace, held together, as they were on Calvary.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A heart increasingly shaped like God's: reverent toward life and rich in mercy.
- Personal appropriation of both conviction about the unborn and the grace of the gospel.
- Concrete steps that embody truth and grace together.
- The cross as the place where the gravest sin is cleansed by innocent blood.

Discussion Prompts

- How is God shaping your heart toward both truth and grace in this matter?
- What concrete step will you take this week that reflects both?
- How does the cross hold together everything this lesson has taught?