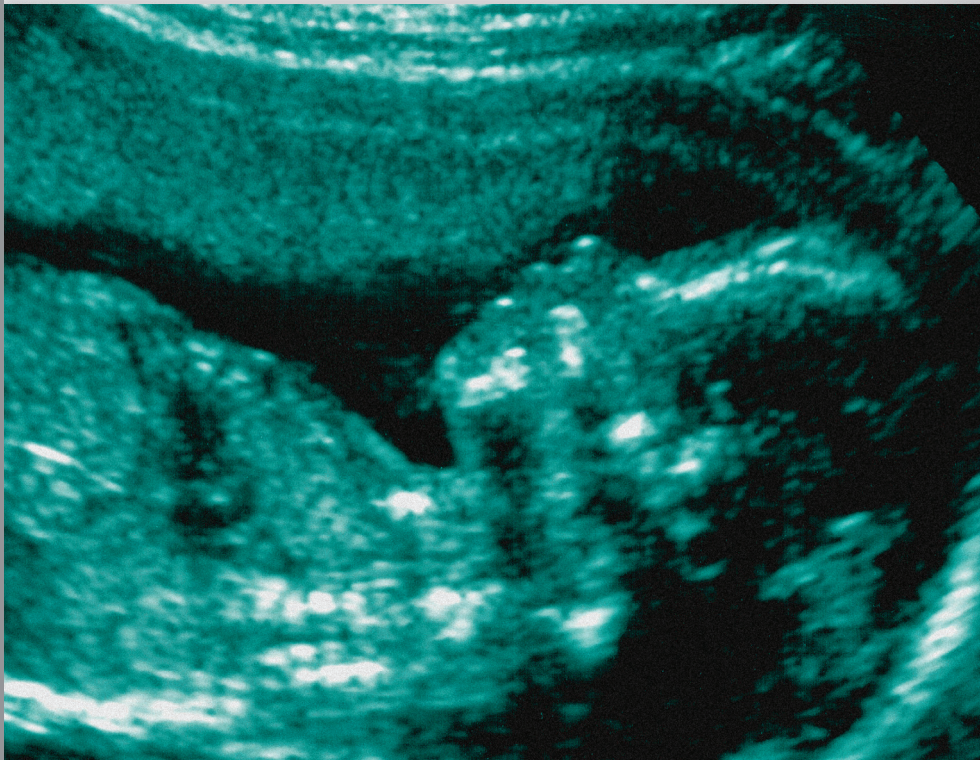


S T U D Y G U I D E



# Abortion

by R.C. Sproul



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R.C. Sproul



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

*Renew your Mind.*

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# Introduction

Each study guide in the Ligonier Ministries Curriculum Series is designed to complement the audio/video presentation made by Dr. R.C. Sproul. With characteristic enthusiasm, R.C.'s messages capture the heart and the mind of the listener. He insists, however, that the learning process is not complete until additional study, reflection, and application have occurred.

This study guide acts as a springboard; it incorporates all of R.C.'s presentation, but helps the user explore in more depth and breadth the implications of the lesson. Whether it is used in the context of a small group or in private study, the springboard effect ensures that the variety of people's needs is taken into consideration.

The goal of each series is to sufficiently interact with the material until the implication and application become evident. R.C.'s appeal to the heart and the mind is intended to set in motion the will and the actions. At its best, Christian education should produce obedience and foster Christlike character.

## SESSION CONTENTS

As you work through this study guide, you will notice the different sections in each session. Each section has a specific purpose, designed to help you explore the material, understand key insights, and then apply them to your life.

**Preparation** (five minutes). Discuss one of the two opening questions. (If you have time, you may want to talk about both.) These will help group members start thinking about the topic R.C. is going to address. Invite each person to express an opinion or share an experience. As group leader, you can model the kind and length of response you want by answering first (as long as your answer doesn't sound like the final word). Keep your answer brief so that preparation doesn't consume too much of the group's time.

**Audio/Video Lecture Notes** (thirty minutes). Introduce the video by explaining very briefly what R.C. will discuss in this segment. Give group members a minute to look over the questions they should try to answer as they watch the video. Generous space is provided for taking notes.

**Discussion** (fifteen minutes). These questions are designed to encourage discussion in a class setting or to stimulate reflection when used for individual study. Some are drawn directly from the lecture; others are meant to probe related topics not touched on by R.C., possibly provoking varying opinions and experiences to be shared. In a fifteen-minute discussion, you may have time for only about three questions. We have provided more than enough questions so that you can select those that seem most relevant or interesting to your group.

**Implications** (ten minutes). These questions help the student understand the personal implications of the truths discovered thus far in the lesson. They serve to guide discussion toward a response that can be made in the student's daily life. Allow a few minutes for each person to write their responses.

As group leader, you can model a level of honesty and vulnerability by offering your own answers first. It is up to you to establish an atmosphere in which people feel comfortable revealing their true feelings and situations.

**Bible Study.** This section consists of questions to guide your study and discussion through several passages of Scripture relating to the topic for that session.

**Lecture Outline.** At the end of each session, a complete lecture outline is included. It is not intended to replace note-taking during the presentation, but serves as a more thorough review and reference.

## LEADING A DISCUSSION

Here are some tips for holding a provocative discussion.

**Pay attention to how you ask the questions.** Don't say, "What did you get for number 1?" Instead, by your tone of voice convey:

- your interest and enthusiasm for the question, and
- your warmth toward the group.

The group will adopt your attitude, your level of energy, and your enthusiasm. Read the questions as though you were asking them of good friends.

**Know how to react when the discussion falters.**

- Be comfortable with silence. Let the group wrestle with possible answers. Don't be quick to jump in and rescue the group with your answers.
- Reword a question if the group has trouble understanding it.
- If the discussion is winding down on a question, go on to the next one. It's not necessary to push people to see every possible angle.

**Feel free to answer questions yourself** occasionally, especially when it would be helpful to model the depth of openness and thought you hope others will show. Don't answer every question, but don't be a silent observer.

**Ask only one question at a time.** Often, participants' responses will suggest a follow-up question to you. Be discerning as to when you are following a fruitful train of thought and when you are going off on a tangent.

**Be aware of time.** Don't spend so much time on discussion questions that you run out of time for the personal implications.

**Encourage constructive controversy.** The group can learn a lot from struggling with the many sides of an issue. If you aren't threatened when someone disagrees, the whole group will be more open and vulnerable. Intervene only if the discussion changes from debating ideas and interpretations of Scripture to attacking each other's feelings and character.

**Don't be the expert.** People will stop talking if they think that you are judging their answers or that you think you know best. Let the Bible be the expert, the final say. Let group members be the experts on their feelings and experiences.

**Encourage people to share feelings as well as facts.** There are two dimensions of truth: the truth about how people feel, and the truth about who God is and what is right. People need to face their real feelings (even anger) about abortion, as well as the facts and logic of the issue.

**Summarize the discussion frequently.** Help the group see where the discussion is going.

## WAYS TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This study may be completed in seven sessions of 45–60 minutes in length, or in seven sessions of 90–120 minutes in length. This study guide is equally useful for Sunday school classes, small-group studies, and individual study.

**For Sunday school.** The seven sessions in this study guide fit well in a conventional Sunday school setting. One session may be completed each week. These are recommended time allotments:

Preparation	5 minutes
Lecture	30 minutes
Discussion	10 minutes
Implications	15 minutes
Bible Study	15 minutes

**For small-group study.** This study guide encourages a high degree of interaction between participants. The discussion questions are engaging and challenging to people with different viewpoints and levels of understanding. Recommended time allotments are:

Preparation	5 minutes
Lecture	30 minutes
Discussion	15 minutes
Implications	10 minutes
Bible Study	20 minutes

**For individual study.** This guide may also be profitably used for personal study together with the lecture series. Taking the time to write out your answers will result in a higher level of understanding and retention and greater personal growth.

#### LIFELONG CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

*Abortion* is only one of many series offered by Ligonier Ministries. The impact of this series can be so profoundly life-changing that it produces a desire for additional teaching on God's work in our lives.

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# What Are the Key Issues?

*On one side of the chasm are those who advocate abortion as a fundamental human right. On the other side are those who assert that abortion is a moral evil. In a relativistic society sanitized of any objective standards of right and wrong, . . . the two sides are doing nothing more than expressing feelings. There is no rational way to choose between them. When moral judgments are based on feelings alone, compromise becomes impossible.*

—Charles Colson

## PREPARATION

1. Think of someone you know who is actively involved on either side of the abortion debate. As far as you can tell, what motivated him or her to become personally involved in this struggle?
2. Some issues are resolved relatively quickly in public debate. What do you think makes the ongoing debate about abortion in our nation so intense and lengthy?

Throughout the series, R.C. makes reference to the following words, at times without definition. It will prove helpful to define and distinguish these words before R.C. begins teaching.

- *Ovum*: the unfertilized female reproductive cell, which after fertilization is termed a zygote, and is capable of developing into a new individual.
- *Zygote*: the cell produced by the union of the mature male sperm and the female egg cell.
- *Embryo*: a developing human individual from the time of implantation on the wall of the uterus up to the eighth week after conception.
- *Fetus*: the developing human in the womb, from the third month after conception until the time of birth.



### AUDIO/VIDEO LECTURE NOTES

1. What are some issues that have seriously threatened national unity in the past?
2. What issues make the abortion controversy so complex and volatile?
3. What are the key questions behind the pivotal issues in this controversy?
4. What are the major sources of authority that provide answers for the fundamental questions dividing us? What difficulties do we encounter with each source?

### DISCUSSION

1. Can you think of any recent news events that illustrate the “spirit of tolerance” in our nation? Name one or two.
2. Why is there often “more heat than light” when abortion is discussed among friends or debated in public?
3. If the abortion controversy is so multifaceted, why do you suppose people argue about it so simplistically?
4. What insights did you gain by considering the abortion controversy as a massive collision of rights?
5. Biblical authority alone is usually sufficient in the church. Why, then, are additional sources of authority used for attempting to resolve this debate?
6. What makes it difficult for people to honestly examine their position and determine why they are pro-abortion, pro-choice, or pro-life?
7. What’s attractive about remaining undecided or “sitting on the fence”?

### IMPLICATIONS

1. How would you describe your current feelings about the abortion debate?
  - a. Passionately angry at pro-life advocates
  - b. Passionately angry at pro-choice or pro-abortion supporters
  - c. Exasperated with all sides
  - d. Pleased with what is happening
  - e. Indifferent
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
2. What barriers could hold you back from examining your position and reasons for it?
3. Other people often have a powerful influence on our values and convictions. Who would become disappointed or angry with you for changing your mind? Strengthening your convictions? Getting off the fence? Staying on the fence?

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## BIBLE STUDY

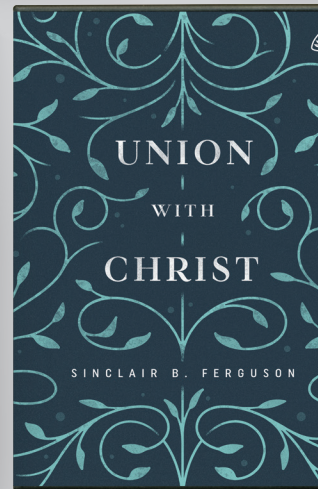
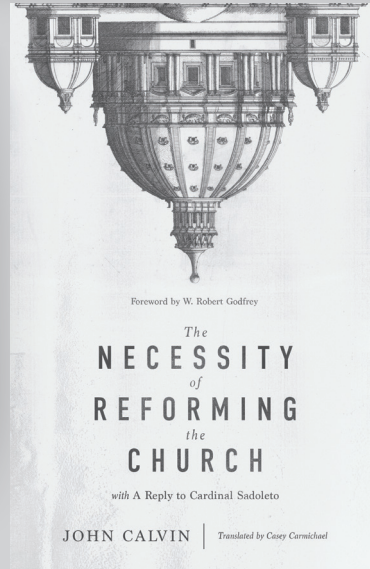
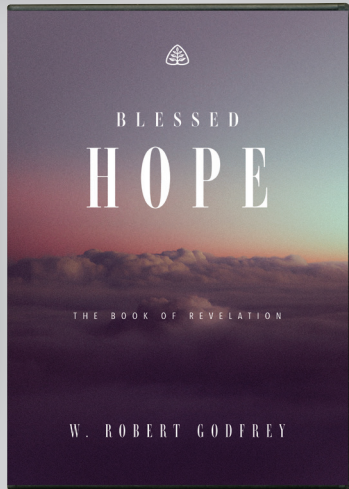
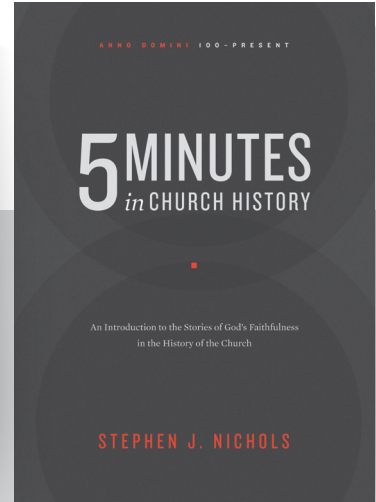
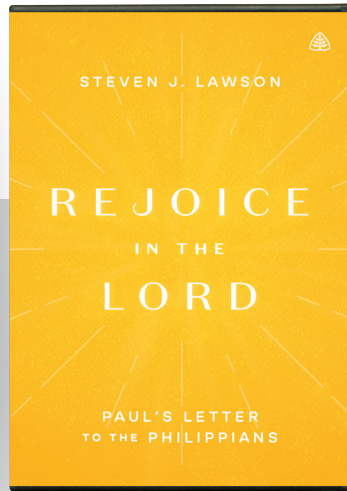
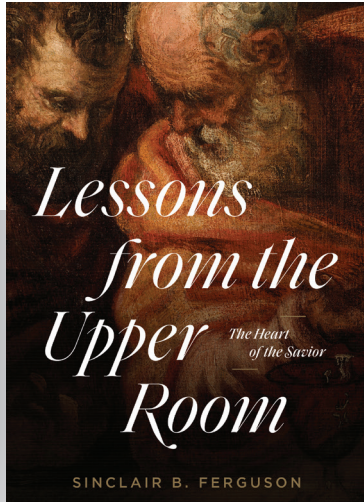
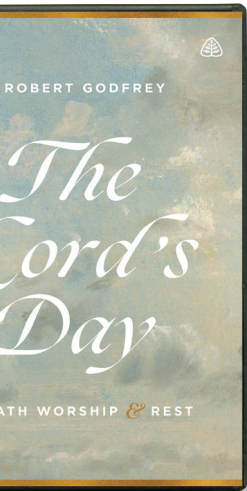
1. Read Acts 19:23–41.
  - a. What parallels do you notice between the abortion controversy and the one focused on in this passage?
  - b. To what motives did Demetrius appeal to incite the workers to action? What tactics are used by either side to influence people to become actively involved in the public debate on abortion?
  - c. What underlying issues contributed to the Ephesian riot? Which of the issues could ignite rioting in the abortion controversy?
2. What might keep leaders in local congregations from acting on their convictions? (John 12:42–43)
3. Why is remaining undecided about abortion an unacceptable alternative for Christians? (Luke 11:42)
4. Why should a believer carefully examine his or her position on abortion? (2 Tim. 2:15)
5. What help is available to believers to think through the abortion issue and come to a reasoned decision? (James 1:5–8)

## LECTURE OUTLINE

1. Living in a great country
  - a. The spirit of tolerance
  - b. Working together after presidential elections
2. Times when the nation has been torn apart
  - a. The tragedy of the Civil War
  - b. The Civil Rights movement
  - c. The struggle of the Vietnam War
3. A complex issue
  - a. Highly charged with emotion
  - b. A profoundly ethical issue
  - c. An issue of life-and-death significance
4. A massive conflict of perceived rights
  - a. The rights of women
  - b. The right of privacy
  - c. The rights of individuals
  - d. The rights of the unborn
  - e. The relationship between church and state

5. The core issue of whether abortion is murder
  - a. Is the fetus alive?
  - b. Is it human life?
  - c. Is it a person?
  - d. Pro-choice voters are generally not advocating abortion with the intent to murder
6. The foundational question of when life begins
7. The sources of authority for answering these ethical questions
  - a. The Bible, natural law, and government decision
  - b. Christians are often divided on what the Bible teaches
  - c. Natural law is often vague
  - d. Majority vote is often wrong
8. The need to examine your position carefully
  - a. The issue is often clouded by emotions and passions
  - b. Understand the reasons for your position
  - c. This issue is too serious to remain on the fence

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