

WHAT ALDERWOOD TEACHES ABOUT HUMAN LIFE

In Short:

At Alderwood, we affirm that human life is a sacred gift from God and is to be cherished, protected, and honored at every stage. We believe that every human being bears the image of God, and that ending a human life through abortion or euthanasia is a violation of God's will and an affront to the dignity of that life. Our position is rooted in the conviction that life and death belong to God alone and are not ours to determine.

At Alderwood, we do not expect everyone within our church family to agree completely on this issue. Our most strongly held beliefs and the beliefs that we require all members to hold can be found in our "Essential Doctrine" statement. Our position on human life, while important, is secondary to that, and we ask that our church family submit to it without causing division, while being free to personally hold differing convictions about what the Scriptures teach on this issue. For those in teaching and leadership roles, we require that they teach Alderwood's position in good faith in whatever way they are representing Alderwood.

The Long Version:

The inherent value of all human life is one of the foundational teachings of Christianity. In a culture that increasingly views life as a matter of personal autonomy and choice, it is important to understand the Biblical teaching that every human life is a sacred creation of God and that our value comes not from our age, health, ability, usefulness or wantedness, but from our status as image-bearers of God.

Our position on human life arises from the following convictions on what the Bible teaches:

- Human life is created by God and bears his image. One of the first things the Bible teaches about humanity is that human beings are created in the image of God (**Genesis 1:27**). This is the source of inherent dignity, worth, and purpose. This value is not earned and cannot be lost, no matter the stage of development, condition of health, or quality of life. Furthermore, God's image separates humans from the rest of the animal kingdom. While all life is created by God, human life holds a unique sanctity and value.
- Human life is not ours to take. God alone is the giver and sustainer of life, and only he has the right to take it. In certain cases in the Scriptures, God specifically authorizes human beings as his agents to take life on his behalf (through capital punishment or in war, for example), but it is sin for human beings to take human life on their own (**Exodus 20:13**). Therefore, the taking of human life through

abortion or euthanasia is not a morally neutral act; it is the wrongful ending of a life that belongs to God. The Bible teaches the value of protecting the vulnerable and those without their own voice, which includes the unborn, disabled, and infirm (**Proverbs 31:8–9**). This prohibition on taking life extends even to the taking of one’s own life. It is not ours to reject the gift of life God has given us, and we echo with the Psalmist, “the course of my life is in your power” (**Psalm 31:15**).

- Grace and compassion must accompany truth (**John 1:17**). While we teach that abortion and euthanasia are against God’s will, we also believe in the power of the gospel to heal, restore, and forgive. People who have violated God’s will in regard to human life are not of a different category of sinner and can find salvation and forgiveness in the name of Jesus just like everyone else. Our church family must be a place of compassion, healing, and support and there is no place for judging or condemning those for whom Jesus died on the basis of whatever specific sins they have committed.

APPENDIX 1 – INTERPRETATIONS OF SPECIFIC PASSAGES

Genesis 1:26–27 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

This passage is the foundation of the Christian view of human dignity and the sanctity of human life. Unlike the rest of Creation, human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. This gives every human life—regardless of age, ability, or stage of development— inherent worth. Being made in God’s image is not based on function or contribution, but on status bestowed by the Creator.

Psalm 139:13–16 For it was you who created my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴ I will praise you
because I have been remarkably and wondrously made.
Your works are wondrous,
and I know this very well.

This poetic reflection affirms the deeply personal nature of God’s involvement in human life from its earliest stages. While this passage doesn’t pinpoint the exact moment life begins, it clearly recognizes that unborn life in the womb is precious to God and worthy of protection.

Exodus 20:13 Do not murder.

This simple commandment establishes the primary moral principle relevant to this conversation: Human beings do not have the authority to take life.

Luke 1:41–44 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped inside her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² Then she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! ⁴³ How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me.

This story records the interaction between the unborn Jesus, the unborn John the Baptist, and both of their mothers. While this story does not specifically address the topic of abortion, it does show the worldview of the Scriptures that human life has begun while still in the womb, and that Jesus and John the Baptist are full persons while still in utero.

Proverbs 31:8–9 Speak up for those who have no voice,
for the justice of all who are dispossessed.

⁹ Speak up, judge righteously,
and defend the cause of the oppressed and needy.

This call to stand up for the vulnerable and those who cannot speak for themselves shows why it is a Christian imperative not to only believe that the taking of human life in the womb is wrong, but to advocate for the lives of the unborn as well. While some wish for everyone to keep their opinions on this issue to themselves and “agree to disagree,” the responsibility to stand up for the oppressed means that staying silent is not an option for follower of Jesus.

APPENDIX 2 – FAQs

Is Alderwood a “pro-life” church?

Yes, one way of characterizing our position is as “pro-life.” We believe that every human life is valuable and should be protected. We oppose abortion and euthanasia, and we advocate for the vulnerable, including the unborn, the elderly, and those with disabilities.

Does Alderwood oppose in vitro fertilization (IVF)?

Alderwood does not have a specific position on IVF. While IVF raises ethical concerns—especially regarding the creation and potential destruction of embryos. We also recognize that IVF is chosen as a way to pursue the creation of human life, not to destroy it. Infertility and genetic disorders are complex, personal, and challenging issues, and we

encourage prayerful discernment, wise counsel, and a commitment to honoring God in all reproductive decisions.

Does Alderwood welcome people who have had abortions?

Yes. Jesus offers grace, healing, and forgiveness for all sin, including abortion. No sin puts a person beyond the reach of God's mercy, and it is sin to exclude or judge a repentant brother or sister in Christ based on their past sins, whatever they are.

Does Alderwood support physician-assisted suicide?

No. We believe that intentionally ending a human life—even in the face of suffering—violates God's authority over life and death. This is even true when someone is requesting that they be assisted in ending their own life. The desire for one's life to end is not a concept that is foreign to the Scriptures. In the midst of great suffering, Job cursed the day of his birth (**Job 3:1**). Elijah asked God to take his life at his moment of greatest despair (**1 Kings 19:4**). Jonah became so angry with God that he wished to die on multiple occasions. In the New Testament, Paul endured such great suffering that he "despaired of life itself" (**2 Corinthians 1:8**). Yet none of these people of God presumed that they actually had the right to end their own lives, and in each case, God met them and gave them the strength to continue. The fact that human life belongs to God restricts not only our right to end the lives of others, but also our right to end our own life. It is God's right to give, and God's right to take away.

That being said, physician-assisted suicide is a separate issue from the removal of life-sustaining medical care for those who cannot sustain life themselves. While it may be medically possible to keep someone alive well past the point at which their body would naturally die, it is not a moral imperative to do so and it is not wrong to withdraw life-sustaining measures in such cases.

What about other issues of human life that are not addressed here?

Alderwood does not take an official position on the topics of capital punishment, taking life in war, or taking life in an act of defending the vulnerable. We believe that our 'default' should be to recognize and honor the status of every person as an image bearer of God, obey the command to protect the vulnerable and marginalized, and to love our neighbors (including our enemies). How these, at times competing, values work out specifically in the above examples and others is complex, and outside the scope of this paper.