

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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## Proliferation of Life

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## Proliferation of Life

### Abstract

"Jesus understood his earthly arrival to mean the putting-back-together-again of people, the way God had intended them to flourish."

Posting about a wider definition of what it means to be pro-life from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/the-proliferation-of-life/>

### Keywords

In All Things, life, worldview, justice, care of the sick

### Disciplines

Christianity

### Comments

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

# The Proliferation of Life

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 [all in allthings.org/the-proliferation-of-life/](https://allthings.org/the-proliferation-of-life/)

Aaron Baart

On a recent trip to Liberia, I got delayed while waiting for bad weather to clear at a small airstrip in Monrovia. We were set to fly north to the community of Foya, the epicenter of the Ebola outbreak. There, we would visit the families who had lost most severely during this horrible scourge. We were set to visit both the Ebola survivors and the orphans of those who had lost their parents to Ebola. We waited for three hours at the airport that morning while the torrential rainy season deluge fell. Standing with us waiting for the flight was the individual who had run the Ebola Treatment Unit (ETU) in Foya throughout one of worst human health scares of the past century. I listened to her stories of what she had endured and the death she had seen. She told stories of how, in Jesus' name, she, along with many others, had served on the front lines against death's sickening advance. As I heard the stories I actually remember thinking to myself at the time that I had never met someone so *pro-life*. Daily and willingly risking her own life for the sake of her neighbor. She and the rest of the Ebola fighters stood between death's attack and the least of these, drawing their line in the red African dirt, defiantly declaring to one of evil's greatest weapons: "No more."

I'm pro-life. I always have been. However, it hasn't been until more recently that I've begun to realize that being pro-life means a great deal more than simply how one votes on Election Day every four years or even whether or not you've ever protested in front of a Planned Parenthood clinic. To be pro-life means to be for the proliferation of life, the actualization of a movement toward [shalom](#) – life the way God intended it to be.

I think Jesus understood himself to be very pro-life. He inaugurated his ministry when he opened the scroll of Isaiah in corporate worship in Nazareth. Luke describes the event like this:

*He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:16-20).*

Jesus understood his earthly arrival to mean the putting-back-together-again of people, the way God had intended them to flourish. He stated it so clearly in John 10:10 when he said, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* Not just life; life to the full. Life restored from every hurt, loss, and sickness that sin had stolen from God's dearly loved creation. That was Jesus's understanding of why he had come. Read the verses again. Has a more pro-life statement ever been uttered? And isn't this exactly where all of history is headed? The total restoration and fixing of

all the shalom that sin has stolen. The project of love par excellence. Life. In abundance. Never to be compromised or stolen from ever again.

Brennan Manning pushed the issue further for followers of Christ when he once told a nation gripped by a cold war that, “Abortion and nuclear weapons are two sides of the same hot coin minted in hell.” And while this statement alone called into question a few typically unquestioned bedfellows of conservative political Christian leanings in America, it is hard to refute what he is getting at: *if you’re pro-life, you’re for the proliferation of life*. Period. To the point: it’s hard to vote for anti-abortion legislation and the proliferation of weapons on the same ticket. We can’t be pro-life in one category and anti-life in the other. An obvious contradiction arises, forcing Christians to ask themselves what we really mean when we adamantly declare, “I am pro-life!” And of course, this line of questioning forces us to ask even more questions about military solutions to diplomatic tensions or the threat of violence, merely for the cause of self-protection. For example, consider this bumper sticker I saw the other day in a local parking lot. The sticker claims to be pro-life, but is the message really consistently pro-life?



I’ve also heard it said that you aren’t really pro-life until you’re willing to make room at your own dinner table for a young pregnant mother — one who is struggling, terrified of the financial burden and life change involved in keeping her baby. Voting for legislation that means massive life change for her while we remain largely unaffected in our comfortable American Dream-pursuing homes isn’t what it means to be pro-life. We have to have more skin in the game than that. Being pro-life isn’t about how we vote. It’s about a fundamental understanding of who Jesus is and what he is doing in the world today.

To follow Jesus is to be, without a doubt, pro-life. But let’s widen the definition to include all that Jesus had hoped his followers would embody — a Kingdom of light, advancing against death on every front, for the proliferation of life for all of God’s creatures, until death dies its last. And this may well look different for all of us – from helping out an orphan by participating in a child sponsorship program to assisting in a friend’s adoption; from curbing your waste production to rewarding environmentally-responsible companies with your consumer loyalty; from lobbying against abortion to making sure your elected officials know that you support the sanctity of all of life. Let’s continue to dream up more ways to expand our definition of what it means to be pro-life.