

The Black Church's Response to the Racialization of Abortion in America

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Abstract

The “racialization” of abortion in America is a concept that draws attention to the fact that blacks (and to a lesser extent, Latinos) are disproportionately represented by abortion statistics as a result of an aggressive racist agenda in America to control the black population through attrition. More so than any other institution, the black church is positioned to confront this crisis as its ministers reclaim their shepherding role to protect their community’s most vulnerable members. This starts with a commitment to traditional family values that are derived from a robustly biblical concept of family, marriage, sex, and child-bearing.

Race and abortion are perhaps two of the most polarizing and controversial topics in the United States today. However, when the two are combined, as I believe they are in the current abortion debates, we are faced with one of the most explosive and divisive issues in modern American history. Of course, pro-abortion advocates and providers like Planned Parenthood deny any connection between abortion and race. Instead, they attribute significantly higher abortion rates in the black community to higher rates of unplanned

pregnancies. This is explained by inadequate family planning services in low-income and minority communities and the destabilization of black families due to poverty, crime, poor education, high incarceration rates, and violence, which make continuing a pregnancy a less desirable option for pregnant black women.

Statistically, it is hard to ignore the racial demographics of abortion. How can one deny the racialization of abortion in America when in some states more black babies are aborted than born? when black children are aborted at nearly four times the rate as white children? when a purported 79 percent of Planned Parenthood's clinics are located in black or minority neighborhoods (making abortions easily accessible to pregnant black women more so than white women)? when African American teenagers abort their babies at five times the rate of their white counterparts? I am not denying the higher incidence of unplanned pregnancies among African Americans or that black women apparently choose abortion as an option more frequently than women of other races. But neither am I ignoring the reality that, according to these race-based statistics, abortion is being aggressively marketed to the black community as another form of birth control (over against aggressively promoting "life affirming" options such as parenthood or adoption).

John Piper, a white pastor and theologian, perceives the injustice of the abortion industry in America. He writes, "The de facto effect (I don't call it the main cause, but net effect) of putting abortion clinics in the urban centers is that the abortion of Hispanic and Black babies is more than double their percentage of the population. Every day 1,300 black babies are killed in America. Seven hundred Hispanic babies die every day from abortion. Call this what you will—when the slaughter has an ethnic face and the percentages are double that of the white community and the killers are almost all white, something is going on here that ought to make the lovers of racial equality and racial harmony wake up."¹ This injustice led another author to comment that abortion in America "is by no means an equal opportunity employer."²

Some readers may accuse me of exaggerating this point, but consider the following statistics about abortion in the black community. According to the Center for Disease Control, black babies comprised nearly 36 percent of all abortions done in the US between 2007 and 2010. This number is staggering considering the fact that blacks made up only 12.8 percent of the

¹ John Piper, "When Is Abortion Racism?," *Desiring God*, 21 January 2007, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/when-is-abortion-racism>.

² "Abortion and Race," *Abort73*, http://www.abort73.com/abortion/abortion_and_race.

total United States population during this period. Since 1973, nearly 16 to 17 million black babies have been aborted, which has led one author to refer to this loss of life as the “Black Infant Holocaust.” Michael Novak, a noted philosopher, journalist, novelist, and diplomat comments that “since the number of current living Blacks (in the US) is 36 million, the missing 16 million represents an enormous loss, for without abortion, America’s Black community would now number 52 million persons. It would be 36 percent larger than it is. Abortion has swept through the Black community like a scythe, cutting down every fourth member.”³

Astonishingly, almost half of all African American pregnancies end in abortion. It has been estimated that on average 1700–1800 black babies are aborted every day in the United States.⁴ Black teenagers between 15 and 19 years old have an abortion rate of 41 per 1000 women, which is more than twice the national average. Since 1973, more blacks have died from abortion than from AIDS, violence, accidents, cancer, and heart disease combined. This disturbing trend has led the Rev. Clenard Childress, founder of the website Blackgenocide.org, to observe that “the most dangerous place for an African-American is in the womb.”⁵ Indeed, if I may borrow a statement from best-selling author David Platt and amend it somewhat to address the subject at hand, “For all the pressing social issues [in the black community], abortion poses the most clear and present danger to [black] people on a daily basis.”⁶

I believe that the African American church has much to offer the black community in the struggle for the civil rights of the unborn in spite of its long history of silence on this issue. As Elijah J. Israel observes about the black experience in America, the black church, “more than any other institution in society,” is “positioned” to confront a morally decadent society in which America’s abortion culture thrives.⁷ But before the black church can effectively step into this role it must embrace a more *biblical* understanding of the role of its ministers/shepherds as well as of its mission and calling to be light in the world. In this article I will suggest some practical steps to

³ See Black Genocide, <http://www.blackgenocide.org/black.html>.

⁴ Elisha J. Israel, in *Killing Black Innocents: The Program to Control African American Reproduction* (self-published, 2014), makes the excellent point that between 1882 and 1986, otherwise known as the Lynching Century, the Tuskegee Institute recorded 3,466 lynchings of African Americans. Today, that number is easily surpassed in a couple of days through abortion (96).

⁵ See Black Genocide, <http://www.blackgenocide.org/black.html>.

⁶ The actual quote is, “For of all the pressing social issues addressed in this book, abortion poses the most clear and present danger to the most people on a daily basis.” David Platt, *A Compassionate Call to Counter Culture* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015), 57.

⁷ Israel, *Killing Black Innocents*, 97.

help the black church—starting with its ministers— rethink its position on abortion, with the aim of helping it to emerge as a powerful defender of the right to life of all unborn children, but especially black children, who are the main target of the abortion industry.

It will become clear in the following discussion that I am writing from the conviction that abortion in black America is a spiritual and moral problem more so than an economic and social one. Therefore, I am addressing this problem from the perspective that to fight against abortion is to engage the satanic forces that energize America’s “culture of death,” which has succeeded in normalizing abortion on demand. Such engagement requires the deployment of spiritual means and methods if victory is to be assured.

I. The Silence of Black Shepherds

When Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, conspired to saturate the black community with her birth control gospel, she turned to black ministers for help. Although Sanger was not a religious person, she and her coconspirators were astute enough to realize that the black minister was incredibly influential in the black community. And although the term “shepherd” probably never crossed Sanger’s mind, she apparently understood the power of the concept when she recruited black ministers to do her dirty work.

In the world of the Bible, the shepherd is the predominant image used to describe the character and work of the individuals God calls to lead his people. In the Old Testament, Israel’s shepherds were mainly its prophets and priests (Jer 2:8); in the New Testament, the shepherds were the “pastors” of local churches, who were also referred to as “elders” and “bishops” (Acts 20:17, 28).

The shepherd imagery is a good one for understanding the God-given responsibility of spiritual leaders. As everyday shepherds were responsible for feeding, guiding, and protecting the sheep under their care, spiritual shepherds feed, guide, and protect God’s spiritual flock, whose care has been entrusted to them.

But occasionally God chided his spiritual leaders for not being good shepherds. Evidently, they failed to adequately feed, guide, and protect God’s flock. In Old Testament times, God sent faithful prophets to warn the people not to follow these misguided leaders. For example, God spoke through his prophet Jeremiah against “the shepherds who care for my

people” in Judah (Jer 23:2).⁸ God indicted Judah’s shepherds for failing to care for his flock: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have *not attended* to them.” A shepherd who left his flock unattended even for a moment exposed the sheep to all sorts of dangers, not the least of which were predators. This was also true in the case of God’s spiritual flock. When left unattended and unguarded through spiritual neglect, God’s people were prone to wander from the truth and to become prey for spiritual predators, namely the idols of the surrounding nations.

Jeremiah also spoke out against leaders who pretended to speak for God: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you’” (Jer 23:16–17). Rather than warning God’s people of impending doom and destruction (exile), Judah’s shepherds assured them that their present course would bring peace, safety, and prosperity.

Similarly, false shepherds were a threat to God’s New Testament people, the church. In his tearful farewell speech to the church in Ephesus, Paul warned the elders/shepherds to “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:28–30). In the spirit of the Old Testament prophets, Paul warned these shepherds “to pay careful attention ... to all the flock” because false shepherds were lurking in the shadows waiting for an opportunity to deceive God’s sheep. These false shepherds would be marked by their infidelity to the truth of God’s Word.

So throughout Scripture the quality that marks a shepherd as belonging to God is his commitment to the Word of God in feeding, guiding, and protecting the flock under his charge. Unfortunately, when Sanger came knocking at the door of the black church, its leadership failed to exercise the kind of thoughtful and faithful shepherding that God requires of his leaders.

⁸ All quotations are from the English Standard Version.

II. *Misguided Shepherds in the Black Community*

The abortion crisis in the black community started with Sanger targeting poor African Americans in the South for birth control, which by that time was the preferred eugenic measure to rid society of black “undesirables.” Sanger knew that because the black community was split over birth control she needed the right people to promote it. She turned to black intellectuals such as W. E. B. Dubois and Mary McLeod Bethune to help convince blacks that birth control would bring about social and economic improvement in the black community. But in order to win over blacks to the birth control cause, Sanger concluded that “the most successful educational approach to the Negro is through a religious appeal.”⁹ So Sanger proceeded to recruit black religious leaders who could persuade blacks that the practice of birth control was in their best interest.

Sanger devised the “Negro Project” in 1939 to accomplish her goal to promote birth control in the black community. Along with several coconspirators, she advocated hiring three to four “colored ministers, preferably with social service backgrounds, and with engaging personalities” to preach the birth control gospel in their own communities.¹⁰ Sanger’s plan worked brilliantly, as black pastors embraced the movement, oblivious to its larger, negative implications. Tragically, the success of the Negro Project continues today, with many black pastors supporting abortion and some even working in tandem with Planned Parenthood. In addition, some black pastors unwittingly support Planned Parenthood and the abortion industry through their inaction and silence. By failing to educate their congregations and the community at large about the evil of abortion and Planned Parenthood, they give the abortion industry a “thumbs-up” to continue exploiting black people. These leaders commit the sin of complicity even though some of them may be conscientiously opposed to abortion. As the saying goes, “Evil flourishes when good men do nothing.” Unfortunately, this is true in the black community, as birth control, and now abortion, has drastically curtailed the growth of the black population in America.

On the issue of abortion, then, black pastors have behaved a lot like the misguided shepherds of Judah. Some have misspoken concerning abortion, declaring to the flock, “It shall be well with you,” and “No disaster shall

⁹ “Margaret Sanger and the Negro Project,” National Black Pro-Life Union, <http://www.nationalblackprolifeunion.com/Margaret-Sanger-and-The-Negro-Project.html>. Cf. Douglas R. Scott, *Bad Choices: A Look Inside Planned Parenthood* (Franklin, TN: Legacy Communications, 1992), 22.

¹⁰ “Margaret Sanger and the Negro Project.”

come upon you.” Instead of warning God’s people of the immorality of abortion and the genocidal motives behind it, these ministers have assured blacks that Planned Parenthood’s idea of “family planning” is the path to “peace, safety, and prosperity” in the black community. Unfortunately, other ministers, though opposed to abortion, have kept silent on the issue either because of fear or misplaced priorities. They, too, have failed to warn the sheep, thus leaving them in harm’s way.

So, whether through active participation or silent opposition, on the issue of abortion black pastors have neglected their responsibility to *biblically* “shepherd the flock of God.” They have set the Word of God aside and misrepresented the chief Shepherd under whom they were called to serve and to whom they will one day give an account (1 Pet 5:4). As a result, millions of America’s “black innocents” have been killed by abortion. This article is a call to black pastors to repent of their misguided leadership and return to the business of biblical shepherding.

III. *Restoring the Traditional Black Family Model*

Having endangered the sheep by not protecting them from the likes of Sanger—and today, Planned Parenthood—black America’s spiritual leaders have a responsibility before God to “break the silence” about abortion and rescue the sheep from the current abortion crisis in the black community. The starting point for this task is resetting the African American moral/spiritual agenda by restoring the primacy of the “holy book” in the black religious and family experience. As the black minister/shepherd leads his people to rediscover the fullness of biblical truth so that it begins to give shape to a full-blown Christian worldview and a corresponding lifestyle that witnesses to the transforming power of the gospel, the black church will be unleashed by God to be a change agent in the black community. This is the kind of impact the Apostle Paul envisioned when he depicted Christians as people who are “blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life” (Phil 2:15–16). As black Christians live according to a biblical worldview in their families and communities, invariably they will have a transforming impact upon the surrounding cultural landscape.

Abortion in the black community is a symptom of a greater social, spiritual, and moral crisis: the disintegration of the traditional black family. I am convinced that the application of a full-blown, Christian worldview to the black family unit will help turn around the present crisis in the black

community. After all, the practice of aborting black babies would be unthinkable in a community where traditional family values prevail. In the remainder of this article I will explore the concepts of family, marriage, sex, and child-bearing from the perspective of a full-blown Christian worldview. I hope to demonstrate that the black family re-envisioned from a biblical, gospel-centered perspective is precisely what the black community needs in order to liberate itself from an abortion culture that preys on its youngest members.

1. *Family*

Most people would agree that the family is the foundation of civilization (Gen 1:26–28).¹¹ According to Tony Evans, the link between the family and civilized society is so strong that “the saga of the nation is the saga of its families written large.”¹² Or, as another author put it, “If there is a breakdown on this [family] level, it is sure to have a ripple effect throughout other social relationships.”¹³ Correspondingly, the black family is the bedrock of the black community. Therefore, the saga of the black community is the saga of its families written large. In other words, as the black family goes, so goes the black community.

The family unit is not an afterthought in God’s plan for the human race—it is central to it. After God made the first man, he declared that it was not good for him to be alone. So God fashioned a counterpart from man’s rib, a woman, and gave her to the man (Gen 2:18–25). This marked the institution of the family. Then God commanded the first couple to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28). By this, God intended the family to expand to include children who would one day start their own families. God would use this process to fill the earth with people who were made in his image.

It is clear from the Bible that the ideal family consists of a husband, a wife, and children. We find this structure embedded not only in the book of Genesis but also in the Apostle Paul’s writings, where Paul describes the ideal family as a relationship between Christ and the husband (1 Cor 11:3a), the husband and wife (1 Cor 11:3b), and parents and their children (Eph 6:1). However, no one would deny that the family structure today does not always conform to the biblical ideal. Negative circumstances, such as death, divorce, separation, desertion, same-sex relationships, spousal and child

¹¹ Tony Evans, *How Should Christians Vote?* (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 15.

¹² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³ Michael S. Horton, *The Law of Perfect Freedom* (Chicago: Moody, 1993), 185.

abuse, incarceration, absentee fathers, shacking up, and out-of-wedlock births, often present challenges to experiencing the family model as God instituted it. Notwithstanding, recovering the biblical family nucleus is the solution to strengthening communities and nations.

The need to reform family values is especially acute in the black community. The late Daniel Patrick Moynihan warned the nation almost fifty years ago that the black family was teetering on the brink of disaster. In a riveting sentence from his controversial 1965 study, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," Moynihan asserted, "At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family."¹⁴ Moynihan perceived that crippling problems in the black community were deeply rooted in the disappearance of the nuclear black family. (A more accurate assessment is that the demise of the nuclear black family in some respects stemmed from racist government policies that contributed to the "crippling problems" of poverty, joblessness, criminal profiling, mass incarceration, inferior schools, single-parent households, and other social ills. Social narratives that blame black people for all the problems in their communities are patently false.) At the time of Moynihan's report, 25 percent of black babies were born out of wedlock. The condition of the black family fifty years later confirms Moynihan's bleak analysis, as the situation in black America has worsened. For example, only 17 percent of black children age seventeen and older live in a family where their biological parents are married. (The figure is 54 percent for white teenagers.)¹⁵ And today over 72 percent of black babies are born out of wedlock, exceeding that of most other groups: 17 percent of Asians, 29 percent of whites, 53 percent of Hispanics, and 66 percent of Native Americans.¹⁶

The condition of the family in the black community will continue to deteriorate unless the black church steps in and does something about it. I am proposing that the black church's response to this problem is to become intentionally "pro-family." This means that the black church must promote traditional family values 365 days a year through teaching, counseling, support groups, mentoring, and constant modeling of Christian thought

¹⁴ Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor, "The Negro Family: The Case For National Action," March, 1965, <http://web.stanford.edu/~mrosenf/Moynihan's%20The%20Negro%20Family.pdf>.

¹⁵ Nigel Boys, "State of Black Family: By Age 17, 83% of Black Teens Live in 'Broken' Homes," *YourBlackWorld*, <http://yourblackworld.net/2015/02/17/state-black-family-age-17-83-black-teens-live-broken-homes/>.

¹⁶ Jesse Washington, "Rate of African American Unwed Mothers Soars to 72 Percent," *Blacknews.com*, http://www.blacknews.com/news/black_unwed_mothers101.shtml#.WEWju_krLIU.

and behavior. The church must have programs in place to help couples inside and outside the church build strong marriages, restore broken ones, avoid divorce, and provide a stable environment for raising children. The church must also develop a ministry that provides mentoring, well-baby care, practical support, baby-sitting services, and help with adoption (if this option is chosen). “Shacking up,” premarital sex, marital infidelity, incest, same-sex relationships, and abortion, all of which are family unfriendly, must be unapologetically denounced as harmful practices. Black males must be mentored from childhood to see that masculinity is not based on fathering children but on being responsible fathers. Regardless of circumstances, black males must recognize their financial and social obligation to care and provide for the children they father. Black churches must also create or support re-entry programs that help ex-felons reintegrate into society and become productive citizens and model family men after their release from prison. As black shepherds place a renewed emphasis on building strong black families, the black church will, like a contagious virus, unleash into the black community a positive value system that is biblical, life affirming, and constructive (rather than destructive).

2. Marriage

Marriage is the key to healthy families. Unfortunately, cohabitation—two people of the opposite sex living in a marital-like relationship without the benefit of marriage—has a long history in the black community. At one time frowned upon by black people, cohabitation, also referred to as shacking up or living together, has become an acceptable and even somewhat respectable alternative to marriage.

Because the African American family makeup is so complex, it is difficult to know the exact number of unmarried black couples who “live together,” but what is clear is that the practice is expanding widely and today it hardly raises eyebrows in the black community. Even the language has morphed when children are involved: “my baby’s daddy” and “my baby’s momma” has replaced “my husband” and “my wife.”

Some couples choose to cohabit in order to get a feel for what marriage will be like or to gauge compatibility. Other couples live together as a substitute for marriage. Increasingly, though, marriage is losing ground in the black community as the basic family unit. In fact, it has been observed that blacks “are the most uncoupled people in the country,” with “the lowest marriage rate of any racial group in the United States.”¹⁷ However, in spite

¹⁷ Joy Jones, “Marriage Is for White People,” *The Washington Post*, <http://www.washington->

of all the practical and self-justifying reasons couples give for cohabiting, the practice is detrimental to healthy families and communities because it flies in the face of God's blueprint for both. God does not stutter in his Word about the importance of marriage. According to Genesis 2, as a precondition of the first couple obeying the commands to "be fruitful and multiply" (have sex and children) and "fill the earth" (create communities and civilizations), God joined the first man and woman in holy matrimony:

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Gen 2:21-25)

Thus there is a divine order to how God provides for healthy societies: Healthy marriages produce healthy families which produce healthy communities.

But this is only part of the story. There is a deeply theological reason for the emphasis God places on marriage in the Bible. Marriage is a picture of something far greater than union between a man and a woman, as great as that concept is. According to W. Ross Blackburn,

God has given mankind a longing for sexual union. Behind that longing is a longing for marriage. And behind the longing for marriage is a longing for God himself. Many in the world do not recognize a longing for God. But they do recognize a longing for sexual intimacy, of the kind where one can know and be known without shame. Marriage faithfully lived out in the church can speak to this longing.¹⁸

The church has a glorious opportunity to help the culture around it discover its deepest longing for God through marriages that conform to "God's design and purpose."¹⁹ In other words, "marriage is a picture, even a foretaste of the gospel," as it points to the good news that sinners are reconciled into an intimate relationship to God through faith in Jesus Christ.²⁰ To the extent that the black church lives out marriage according to God's design it fulfills its calling to "let its light shine in the world." On the other hand, "To

post.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/25/AR2006032500029.html.

¹⁸ W. Ross Blackburn, "Sex and Fullness: A Rejoinder to Dennis Hollinger on Contraception," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58 (2015): 128.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

the extent the [black] church does not live out marriage as God has ordered it is the extent to which [it] misrepresent[s] the gospel in precisely the area where the gospel is most apparent.”²¹

3. Sex

Israel observes rightly that high rates of unintended pregnancies among blacks betray “a state of moral depravity exist[ing] within the black community.”²² In other words, black people are victims, but not entirely innocent victims, of America’s abortion crisis. The only completely innocent victims of this nation’s abortion crisis are unborn babies. Let me be clear: in a majority of cases, abortions are the product of unintended pregnancies, and unintended pregnancies are the product of the misuse of sex, and the misuse of sex is the product of sinful choices. Unfortunately, the black church, historically, has not taken a strong stand in this area, and, sadly, some of its ministers have been shining examples of sexual impurity to the flock. Therefore, it is important that the black church understand and embrace sex from a comprehensive biblical worldview.

The first chapter of Genesis reminds the reader of the uniqueness of man’s creation: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). Humankind’s creation in the image of God as male and female suggests that the human race was created “with capacities for intense sexual pleasure and with a calling to commitment in marriage and continence [self-restraint] in singleness.”²³ In other words, God did not create sex for man’s misuse. In fact, sex, like everything else God made, is designed ultimately to bring glory to God. Therefore, “all misuses of our sexuality (adultery, fornication, illicit fantasies, masturbation, pornography, homosexual behavior, rape, sexual child abuse, bestiality, exhibitionism, etc.) distort the true knowledge of God. God means for human sexual knowledge to be a pointer and foretaste of our relationship with him.”²⁴

The Bible leaves us with little doubt that the casual misuse of sex “is a chief arena of the brokenness of sin.”²⁵ In Romans 1 Paul describes this brokenness in terms of a sexual free-for-all. The key verses (24–27) follow Paul’s description of people who refuse to obey and worship the Creator:

²¹ Ibid., 128.

²² Israel, *Killing Black Innocents*, 91.

²³ John Piper and Justin Taylor, eds., *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 26.

²⁴ Ibid., 30.

²⁵ Ibid., 50.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Here Paul makes it clear that the depth of human sin and rebellion is exhibited in the normalization of sexual deviancy, particularly in the form of same-sex relationships. Those who engage in such activities, Paul warns, “receive the due penalty for their error,” discovering to their dismay that “Victoria’s Secret” is really “Victoria’s Lie.”

But notice what Paul identifies as the trigger mechanism for the sexual decadence of human society: people “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!” Another word for this ultimate exchange of loyalties is idolatry. John Freeman defines an idol as “anything we turn to that makes us feel alive in some sense.”²⁶ Put another way, an idol is anything one substitutes in place of God in the attempt to satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart that God alone can satisfy. Freeman goes on to explain that idolatry is the “default mode” of our sinful hearts. Human beings sin by nature and choice. In fact, as Blackburn observes, at “the most fundamental level ... our nature produces our choices. We inherit a sinful nature from our father Adam so that we are spring-loaded to sin.”²⁷ The most basic form that our sin takes is idolatry, which means that man’s natural tendency is to go after counterfeit gods “to replace the real thing.” So “sexual sin in any form is an attempt to seek after a grander experience, on par with being overwhelmed and awed by the living God.”²⁸ When it comes to the misuse of sex, people need to view sex as masking a hidden idol of the heart.

All of this suggests that the high rate of unintended pregnancies (and therefore abortions) in the black community has a much deeper source than “inadequate family planning.” The real source is spiritual. It is sinful idolatry. It is bowing to the gods of this age. Therefore, the solution to unintended pregnancies cannot be reduced to better family planning or safer sex. What the black church and black community need is the power of the gospel first and foremost, because only the gospel can pull down the sexual

²⁶ John Freeman, *Hide or Seek: When Men Get Real with God about Sex* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2014), 31.

²⁷ Blackburn, “Sex and Fullness,” 111.

²⁸ Freeman, *Hide or Seek*, 33.

idols of men's hearts and enthrone Jesus Christ there as Lord and King. This means that the black church must get back to its core mission to preach the gospel and make disciples. That is the only real cure for the sexual looseness (and other self-inflicted problems) that pervade the black community.

4. *Child-bearing*

The sexual revolution in America ushered in the practice of severing sex from marriage and childbearing. Eventually, abortion became the main remedy for the millions of unintended and unwanted pregnancies that ensued. As Blackburn explains, "while abortion is not, strictly speaking, a contraceptive, it is still very much the fruit of a contraceptive mentality that divorces sex from pregnancy, and it is a necessary component in a society committed to sex apart from childbearing. And, with roughly 1.2 million babies aborted annually, abortion is clearly not rare, but is rather a devastatingly common method of birth control."²⁹ This is particularly true in the black community, where one out of every two pregnancies ends in abortion.

Unfortunately, by separating sex from child-bearing our culture promotes the practice of planning children around life. In other words, if the sexual act produces an unplanned child, the mother can dispose of it if it conflicts with her lifestyle. But the command given to the first couple "to be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:26) suggests that couples are to plan life around children.³⁰ Sex serves God's purpose to create healthy families, which produce healthy communities and nations. This does not mean that sex is for procreation purposes only. The fact that the female reproductive cycle includes only a brief window in the month for impregnation suggests that sex has other purposes besides procreation (e.g., consummation, commitment, act of love, pleasure, and communication). However, as Dennis Hollinger observes, "any sexual act must be in the context of procreation and be willing to bear the potential fruit from the act."³¹ In other words, the procreative nature of sex means that all parenthood is to be considered "planned" (even when contraceptives fail) and all children are to be treated as "wanted." Understanding sex from this full-blown Christian worldview perspective is critical to building strong black families and communities because it holds together marriage, sex, and childbearing in the order prescribed by God. Indeed, the Bible is perfectly clear that "only within the bounds of matrimony will intercourse 'produce a stable society.'"³²

²⁹ Blackburn, "Sex and Fullness," 128.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

³¹ Dennis P. Hollinger, "The Ethics of Contraception: A Theological Assessment," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56.4 (2013): 693.

³² Boys, "State of Black Family."

Conclusion

The words of Bishop E. W. Jackson probably best summarize the challenges presented in this article: “Only God, prayer, and a good church led by a good pastor can lead people toward chastity, life-long marriage and a stable family. The black church must lead in this area.”³³ Indeed, this is how the black church will win the battle against abortion in the black community.

But if black church leaders persist in supporting abortion, whether through active participation or silent opposition, the warning of Jeremiah 5:29–31 may very well apply to it:

“Shall I not punish them for these things? Declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?” An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?

Now is the time for black pastors to choose wisely.

³³ Ibid.