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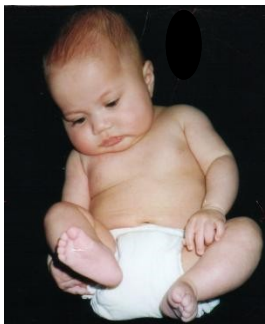
We exist to love Jesus and live for Him.

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The State of Abortion by Brian Watson

We envision a congregation whose love for Jesus and one another leaves a clear and compelling witness for Christ.

For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.
My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Psalm 139:13-15



Recently, you may have heard that the Health Care and Wellness Committee of the Washington State House of Representatives was considering a piece of legislation, House Bill 1366, which could possibly endanger pregnancy resource centers (sometimes called crisis pregnancy centers). One of those centers is the Pregnancy Resource Center of Snohomish County, which PBC supports. This piece of legislation claims that these centers have misled their clients about their services. It would require these centers to make abundantly clear that they do not offer abortions or make referrals for abortions, as well as clarifying other services they do and do not provide. While this proposed bill may not seem like a big issue, it is clearly intended to hamper pro-life efforts. If the state legislature passes this bill, pregnancy resource centers could face severe fines for failing to jump through the various hoops that this bill would establish. They could also be subject to petty civil suits. Fines and litigation could force these centers to close. The bill has now passed through the Health Care and Wellness Committee and will move on to the House Rules Committee, before going to the floor of the House.

The news of this bill, along with the recent thirty-eighth anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, has caused me to reflect on the issue of abortion. While abortions are still legal and a shocking number of them are performed in the U.S. and throughout the world, there are some signs of hope. The number of abortions in America reached a high point in 1992, when 1.6 million were performed. That number is now around 1.2 million, a reduction of 25 percent.¹ In 1996, 56 percent of Americans were pro-choice; in 2009, 51 percent of Americans were pro-life.² An increasing number of medical professionals are unwilling to perform abortions. One Planned Parenthood employee, Abby Johnson, resigned after she

participated in an ultrasound-guided abortion. She has written a book about her change of heart called *Unplanned*. As truth about the horrors of abortion comes to light, surely more people will change their minds about the issue.

In the political arena, efforts to protect the unborn are being made on the state level. In 2010, 89 new laws that protect the unborn and their mothers were introduced in 32 states and the District of Columbia. In 2009, there were 77 such laws and only 33 in 2008. In Nebraska, a new law bans abortions after 20 weeks.³ This battle could be won on the state level.

However, the battle is far from over. Recently, the New York City Health Department released some statistics regarding abortions in 2009. About 40 percent of all pregnancies ended in abortion in New York City that year (the national average is 19 percent). Most of those abortions were found among the poor and minorities (which was one of the goals of Planned Parenthood's founder, Margaret Sanger). 60 percent of all pregnancies among African-Americans ended in abortion. That number was 41 percent among Hispanics, 22 percent among Asian-Americans, and 20 percent among white women.⁴

Over 40 million abortions are performed worldwide each year. The problem overwhelms us and sometimes we feel powerless and paralyzed. What can we do in the face of such worldwide evil? First, we must pray. According to James 5:16, "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." Let us remember that the power is God's and that He is sovereign. We should pray that women would not seek

abortions, that the fathers of the unborn would not try to coerce these women to make that decision, that abortion doctors and those who work at Planned Parenthood would see their actions as evil, and that laws would be changed. We should educate ourselves about abortion and the latest abortion-related issues. One way to do that is to visit www.lifenews.com.

We can also let our state legislators know how we feel about abortion-related legislation. Contact your state representatives and senators and let them know your position. If you are not certain of you who your legislators are, visit <http://www.leg.wa.gov/pages/home.aspx>.

Finally, we must be prepared to act. We are supposed to be salt and light in the world. We must remember that we are new creations, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation, and we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). We must find ways to bring the gospel to those who are sorely in need of it, including women who didn't intend to get pregnant and the young men who are running away from responsibility. In the Roman Empire, unwanted babies (often females) were abandoned. Early Christians frequently adopted these "throw-away children." Their efforts eventually produced results in 374, when Emperor Valentinian outlawed infanticide and child abandonment.⁵ Today, Christians may need to perform similar actions of love and sacrifice in order to transform our culture.

¹Warren Cole Smith, "A Life for Life," *World* (January 29, 2011), 31.

²<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1576/abortion.aspx>

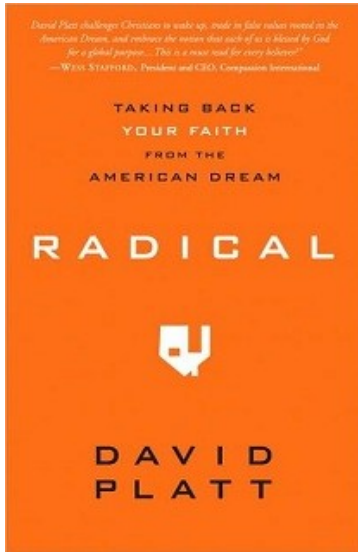
³Alisa Harris, "Red Zone Defense," *World* (January 29, 2011), 38.

⁴*Ibid.*, 44.

⁵Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Society* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 53.

A Book Review by Ryan Reese

Radical: Taking Back Your Faith From the American Dream, by David Platt (Multnomah, 2010).



Very rarely do I read a book and: 1) want to order a box full and give them to everyone I know, and, 2) want to immediately read the book again. *Radical* was such a book. David Platt offers an unflinching clarion call to reevaluate the gospel we preach and the lives we live in light of the Scriptures. In essence, he is aiming to reacquaint the followers of Jesus with Jesus. Sadly, many Christians are quick to write off some of Jesus' more difficult teachings. Platt offers a stern warning to sentences beginning, "what Jesus really meant was . . .". He says, "this is where we need to pause... because we are starting to redefine Christianity." In doing so, Platt asserts, "we are giving in to the dangerous temptation to take the Jesus of the Bible and twist him into a version of Jesus we are more comfortable with" (p. 13). This type of watered-down Christianity in fact ceases to be Christianity at all.

And this is exactly what Platt believes many in the church have done—drifted far from the teachings of the Son of God we worship. We've instead

assimilated him to our "American Dream." Platt quotes James Truslow Adams, credited with coining the phrase in 1931: The American dream is "a dream . . . in which each man and woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are (p. 46)." The author astutely points out that "while the goal of the American dream is to make much of us, the goal of the gospel is to make much of God" (p. 47). A gospel of grace flies in the face of rugged individualism. A God who saves us because of our *inability* is hard to embrace while placing such great stock in our ability. There is no room for pride at the foot of the cross.

David Platt aggressively takes on many of the wrongheaded out-workings of this modified, Jesus-lite Christianity. He calls the church to task on our lack of compassion for the lost, our paltry commitment to alleviate suffering in the world, our failure in making disciples, our idolatry of safety, luxury, and so on. But he is not all doom and gloom. The book is full of wonderful examples of what the Spirit of God is doing in hearts all over the world and here in America. And the author doesn't leave us without positive steps to get realigned with the Jesus of the Bible. In his final chapter he dares the reader to commit to "the Radical Experiment," offering five things to do or accomplish in the next year. After reading such a challenging book, I thought they would be much more difficult than they actually were. And I found them to be things all Christians should be doing *anyway*. What are these five steps to take? I'm not telling you because I really want you to read the book.

I know everyone has not enjoyed this book as much as I have. I struggled with revealing too much—hoping not to scare you away from the spiritual

challenge. And really, you can pick apart anything if that is your desire. Are some of his statements and comparisons over the top? Maybe. Does Platt give us a robust, Biblical plan on alleviating suffering in the world? No, just strong motivation to do *something*. But I think the majority of the resistance to the message of *Radical* tells more about the idols of our hearts than the problems with the book. About such hearts, Platt uses a great quote by Robert Gundry: "That Jesus did not command all his followers to sell all their possessions gives comfort only to the kind of people to whom he *would* issue that command" (p. 120). If you read this book with an open mind, the Holy Spirit will get to work. This book could be a Holy Spirit sledgehammer to our cold, self-satisfied hearts. This is how it worked in mine. Reading *Radical* made me want to read the Bible more reverently and pray more fervently. I was challenged by God to be less attached to my possessions and more generous with my time, my money, and the Gospel of Jesus. I was reminded to love my brothers and sisters all over the world. I was encouraged to depend more on God and his power than on my own skills and gifts. I don't think Jesus would be too disappointed with any of those things. I dare you. Read this book.



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