

Meeting 4: ERI Discussion¹

Note: Send an email a week in advance with links to select videos.

Topics

Module 4: The Biological Case for the Unborn

- Lesson 1 - The Ten Second Pro-Life Apologist
- Lesson 2 - Living, Human Organism
- Lesson 3 - The Last Resort Response to the Skeptic

Open the Meeting: (12 min.)

Ice-breaker: (10 min.)

- www.protectlifemi.org/ice

Role Count: (1 min.)

- sign up sheet or have secretary take note

Announcements: (2 min.)

- Next meeting will be a (choose one) Discussion/Activism/Educational meeting.
Note: Remind them if they need to read/watch anything prior to the next meeting.
- Update about upcoming events, tabling, outreach opportunities, etc.

Debrief from Outreach, if applicable (10-15 minutes)

Use the Debrief Guide (on our website, under outreach) to debrief from a recent outreach. This only needs to be done once for each outreach. The purpose of debriefing is to share experiences and learn from mistakes and successes.

ERI Discussion: (30-40 min.)

Share the Meeting's Purpose: how to hand biological questions and skeptics.

Preliminary Questions:

- Who watched the videos before hand?
- Can someone give a brief summary of the videos for those who missed it?
- What stood out to you?

ERI Questions:

At the end of this sheet, under Lesson 4:3, there is a discussion question. Ask this before doing the scripted practice session.

¹ Apologetics videos and questions are graciously provided by Equal Rights Institute.

ERI Practice: See Attached Sheet

- Transition into scripted practice sessions.
- Note: For time restraint, feel free to cut out questions that don't fit your group well, if needed.

Close the Meeting: (2 min.)

Thank you for coming!!

Next Meeting will be a (choose one) Activism/Discussion/Educational meeting. Share where and when.

Reminder of Club Announcements.

The Biological Case for the Unborn

4:1 – The Ten Second Pro-Life Apologist

ACTIVITIES:

Memorize

Instructions: Everyone divide into pairs (unless some people would prefer to work by themselves) and memorize the Ten Second Pro-Life Apologist until everyone in the group can recite it for memory without looking at any notes.

Ten Second Pro-Life Apologist

1. If something is growing, isn't it alive?
2. If it has human parents, isn't it human?
3. And living humans, or human beings like you and me, are valuable, aren't they?

Practice Dialogue (Scripted)

Instructions: Divide into pairs and have one person play pro-life and the other person play pro-choice.

PC: No one knows when life begins.

PL: Do you mean no one knows when life begins biologically, or do you mean something more philosophical, like no one knows when someone like you and me becomes a valuable person?

Switch sides so everyone has the opportunity to read this critical clarification question aloud.

PC: The fetus isn't human.

PL: Do you mean the fetus isn't human biologically, or do you mean something more philosophical, like it's not a valuable person like you and me?

4:2 – Living, Human Organism

SUMMARY:

The unborn is alive because it has the characteristics of living things.

- Cellular reproduction.
- Metabolizing food for energy.
- Reacting to stimuli.

If something has these three things, whether it is alive or not is not controversial.

The unborn is human because:

- Living things reproduce after their own kind.
- The unborn has uniquely human DNA.

The unborn is a whole organism because:

- The unborn is not merely a part of a body like a skin cell or a sperm cell, it is a whole organism with its own parts.
- The unborn is not constructed like a car, it develops itself (more like a polaroid camera).
- Nothing is added to the unborn from the time of its fertilization except adequate nutrition and a proper environment (which we still need). So if an adult (such as you) is an organism now, then you must have been the same organism at fertilization since nothing essential was added to you.

ACTIVITIES:

Practice Dialogue (Scripted)

Instructions: Divide into pairs and have one person play pro-life and the other person play pro-choice.

PC: The fetus isn't even human.

PL: (Critical Clarification Question) I want to make sure I'm understanding you. Do you mean the fetus isn't human biologically, or do you mean something more philosophical, like it's not a person deserving of rights?

PC: I mean it's not even biologically human until it's born. Why are you making such a big deal about a potential human?

PL: (Ten Second Pro-Life Apologist) That's a great question. It's because I don't think it's just a potential human, I think it's an actual human with great potential. I think that because:

If the unborn is growing, it must be alive.

If it has human parents, it must be human.

And living humans, or human beings like you and I, are valuable, aren't they?

PC: It's not a living human, because it's not alive.

PL: (The unborn is alive) Help me understand, why do you believe something that is growing through cellular reproduction, metabolizing food for energy, and reacting to stimuli is not alive? I don't know of any scientist that would say something with those characteristics isn't at least a living thing.

PC: Well maybe it's technically alive, but even a tree is alive. That doesn't make it human.

PL: (The unborn is human) That's true. But how do two human parents produce anything other than a human? Moreover the embryo has distinctly human DNA from fertilization. Whether it's a valuable person is certainly philosophically controversial, but do you know of an embryologist that says it's not a member of the species homo sapiens?

PC: Well it has homo sapiens DNA and it is technically alive, but that's also true of a sperm cell or a skin cell. Are you saying that sperm is sacred?

PL: (The unborn is an organism) No, but good question. An embryo isn't merely a cell that has homo sapiens DNA and biological life, it is an organism. A sperm cell or a skin cell is a part of an organism, whereas an embryo is itself an organism with its own functioning parts. One way we can know that the embryo is an organism is the fact that we know you are an organism, and nothing essential has been added to you from the time of your

fertilization. All that was added was adequate nutrition and a proper environment, so if you're an organism now, you must have been an organism then too.

PC: Okay, fair enough, but the fetus certainly isn't a person.

Practice Dialogue (Improvised)

Instructions: Take turns (either in pairs or as a group) playing the pro-life side with these prompts. Make sure everyone gets the chance to practice.

PC: The fetus is not biologically alive. It's just potential life.

PC: The fetus isn't human yet, it becomes human later.

PC: The fetus may be biologically alive and fine it has human DNA, but the same is true of skin cells and sperm cells. The embryo is functionally no different. It's just human cells, not an organism.

4:3 – The Last Resort Response to the Skeptic

SUMMARY:

If someone is stubbornly insisting that the unborn is not a living, human organism, in spite of all of the scientific evidence, we will shift the burden of proof as a last resort. We at ERI would prefer to not make the rationally legitimate move of shifting the burden of proof if we don't have to because we think it's more persuasive. **No one** changes their mind about something important in response to a burden of proof shift. But once you're out of evidence to offer, graciously ask them to defend their unscientific claim.

ACTIVITIES:

Practice Dialogue (Scripted)

Instructions: Divide into pairs and practice these questions to respond to the skeptic.

PL: Just to be clear, you're suggesting that a zygote, an embryo after fertilization, is functionally no different than a sperm cell or a skin cell?

PL: How did you come to that conclusion? Did you learn it in a science class, or from a biology textbook or something?

PL: Why do you think these doctors and embryologists (EqualRightsInstitute.com/Sources) are saying otherwise?

PL: Do you know of any doctors or embryologists that have the same set of scientific beliefs about the embryo that you do?

Discussion Question

1. ERI staff members are slow to shift the burden of proof for pragmatic reasons, even going so far as to call it a last resort. Do you agree with their assessment? Is their approach too inclined to let pro-choice people get away with making unsubstantiated claims?