

Meeting 3: ERI Discussion¹

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

Topics

Module 3: Trot Out a Toddler

- Lesson 1 - The ERI Approach
- Lesson 2 - Four More Examples: Unwanted Children, Overpopulation, You're a Man, and Back-Alley Abortions
- Lesson 3 - A Quick Response to a Common Objection [Advanced]

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: seeing the pre-born as human persons, just like toddlers are.

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 Practice: See Attached Sheet

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

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

- Transition into scripted practice sessions.

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.

Trot Out a Toddler

3:1 – The ERI Approach

SUMMARY:

In order for a pro-choice person to show that abortion is justified, they have to accomplish one of two things. They have to show that either:

- A. the unborn is not a human person, or
- B. the woman's right to bodily autonomy gives her the right to have an abortion regardless of the unborn's moral status.

In other words, to get to the conclusion "abortion should be legal," their argument has to have a premise about the moral status of the unborn, or about the nature of bodily rights.

So if someone makes an argument to justify abortion without addressing one of those two issues, then one of those two issues has to be a hidden premise in their argument. We don't want premises to be hidden. We want as much clarity as possible in our conversation, so we need to artfully bring that hidden premise out into the light so then we can discuss it.

If the argument for abortion would not justify killing a born child, we compare the argument for abortion to an argument for killing a toddler in order to draw out the hidden premise and graciously direct the conversation to the critical areas of disagreement.

- 1. Affirm her concern (without agreeing with her solution)
- 2. Brace her for the weird question
- 3. Create a parallel situation (can we kill a toddler for the same reason?)
- 4. Describe the logic

ACTIVITIES:

Practice Dialogue (Scripted)

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

PC: Look, some women are just too poor to have a child, so abortion needs to be available.

PL: [**Affirm her concern**] You're right, that is a real problem. You seem like you really care about people. Some pro-life people seem to think people are pro-choice because they hate babies or something, but we both know that's not true. You're concerned about women.

PC: Yeah I am. I don't like abortion, I don't think anyone really likes abortion, but some women really need it.

PL: [**Brace her for the weird question**] I want to ask you kind of a weird question, just go with me for a minute. I'm trying to clarify something.

PC: Okay, go ahead.

PL: [**Create a parallel situation: can we kill a toddler for the same reason?**] Suppose a woman has a toddler. This woman is really poor, she just lost her job, and she can barely feed herself, much less the toddler. Should she have the right to kill her toddler because she's so poor?

PC: No, of course not.

PL: [**Describe the logic**] Obviously I agree with you. Let me pull back the curtain for you on how I think about these kinds of questions. I don't want to trick you, I want to be totally transparent about where I'm coming from here.

I have this really weird view. It might sound strange to you, but I think I have good arguments for it. My weird view is that a human embryo right at fertilization is just as valuable a human person as a human toddler, even though they look really different. I know that might sound crazy, but just go with me for a minute.

If I'm right about that really weird view, then it seems like any difficult circumstance that is going to justify killing the embryo would have to also justify killing the toddler, and there aren't any good reasons to kill toddlers. This is why I think it is so important to figure out if the embryo is a valuable human person, like we are. I think if the embryo is a valuable human person, then we need to protect it, just like we'd protect a toddler. What do you think? *[End of activity]*

It generally won't be that simple. They don't usually respond as clearly, using convenient categories to describe their view and distinguish it from other similar-sounding views. You'll have to listen well and ask good clarification questions to figure out what they actually believe.

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. Try not to skip steps. Remember to create a parallel situation that matches the concern (don't just say "what if she's poor?" over and over!). Once you complete the "Describe the logic" step, end the dialogue.

PC: Women need to have the right to choose for themselves how they want to live their lives. (Start by affirming the concern.)

PC: Abortion is a private medical decision. It should stay between a woman and her Doctor. (Start by affirming the concern.)

PC: We need abortion because otherwise there will be so many unwanted children. Every child a wanted child. (Start by affirming the concern. If you aren't sure what to say, Tim addresses this case in the next video.)

PC: The world is overpopulated, without abortion it would just get worse! (Start by affirming the concern. If you aren't sure what to say, Tim addresses this case in the next video.)

But What Would Happen Next?

There are four especially likely responses to the “Describe the logic” step:

- PC: Yeah sure, but the embryo isn’t human yet, it’s just a clump of cells.
(You need to make a biological case for the unborn. See Module 4)
- PC: Yeah sure, but the embryo is not a person. It has human DNA, but it’s not like a toddler. It can’t even think.
(You need to make a philosophical case for the unborn. See Module 5)
- PC: But think about what happens if we make abortion illegal. Is it really hurting us that bad to kill embryos? Is it really worse than people being trapped in poverty?
(You need to address her fear of the consequences of making abortion illegal. See Module 8)
- PC: It doesn’t matter if it’s a person or not. The embryo is in the woman’s body, and women should have a choice to do what they want with their bodies.
(You need to address her bodily rights argument. See Module 7)

3:2 – The Four More Examples: Unwanted Children, Overpopulation, "You're a Man," and Back-Alley Abortions

ACTIVITIES:

Practice Dialogue (Improvised)

Instructions: All guys in the group need to practice responding to the “You’re a Man” objection. Practice telling the fishing story or something like it so you’ll know what to do *when* (not if) you get this objection thrown at you on campus.

- PC: You’re a man! How can you have an opinion about abortion when you can’t even get pregnant? (Start by affirming the concern.)

Practice Dialogue (Improvised)

Instructions: Divide into pairs and run through this activity twice so each person can practice playing pro-life. You *will* get this objection on campus so everyone needs to practice. Practice trotting out a ten-year-old so you can get the hang of it.

- PC: If you make abortion illegal, women are just going to die in the back-alleys in coat-hanger abortions! (Start by affirming the concern.)

3:3 – A Quick Response to a Common Objection

SUMMARY:

Sometimes the pro-choice person will respond by saying “Well that’s different, she should just give it up for adoption.” When this happens, sometimes they aren’t being intentionally difficult, they’re pointing out a legitimate disanalogy, so I offer an adjustment to get around this problem. “Let’s say she calls Child Protective Services and tells them, ‘You need to take my toddler, I can’t afford to feed him so I’m going to kill him otherwise.’ What if for some reason they can’t take the toddler for nine months? World War 3 broke out or something. They tell her, ‘We’re so sorry, we can’t take your child yet, take care of him for just nine months, then we’ll get him off your hands.’ Now can she kill the toddler because she’s so poor?” This shows that the reason you can’t kill the toddler is not merely that you have another option, because even if you remove that option, it is still obviously wrong to kill the toddler.