

“What About Abortion in the Case of Rape or Incest?”

Dear Sue,

I just read your article on [abortion](#) as a source to prepare a message on abortion. Thank you for a well written, well documented work. Many of the sermon reviews I have done so far lack documentation for the claims being made in the sermon. I am curious to know more regarding your point when you touched on the issue of abortion because of rape or incest. What you would say to women in those situations, and do you leave a little more room for personal decision there?

Thank you for your kind words about my article.

Since I am a woman, I've definitely thought about the possibility of pregnancy resulting from rape: what would I do if it happened to me? As traumatic and life-altering as rape is, I would still need to pass it through my Christian worldview filter, and I come to these conclusions (which also apply to incest):

1. God is still in control, even when He allows unspeakable evil into our lives.
2. Because He is good, that means He has a purpose and a plan to redeem even unspeakable evil, which means we can trust Him.
3. Pregnancy resulting from rape or incest brings an innocent child into existence, who has a right to life because God has made him or her in His image. He loves them and He has a plan for their lives, or they would never have been conceived.
4. Aborting a baby conceived by rape or incest doesn't make the pain go away, and it doesn't make the problem go away.
5. It makes it worse because the lingering guilt of abortion is horrific. A woman will often start to think of her life as divided into BA/AA (before the abortion/after the abortion).

6. In addition to the trauma of being raped or incested, a woman is then further burdened with post-abortion syndrome. (See my article "[The Dark Underside of Abortion.](#)")

I understand that from a human standpoint, giving "more room for personal decision" to abort in the case of rape or incest makes sense. But from an eternal, biblical perspective, it still violates God's command not to murder, and it still incurs the consequences of one's own sinful choice. When a woman is victimized by rape or incest, she is not responsible for what was done to her, but she is responsible for her response to being sinned against. Sinning against her unborn baby and against herself is not justified, even though we certainly understand why she would do it. The need for compassion is excruciating. Which is why, if I were were talking to someone pregnant as the result of rape or incest, I would gently and lovingly give her the bigger picture of what is at stake.

Thank you so much for asking for clarification on my position on this important question. I am grateful for the chance to explain what I have hammered out concerning this very difficult issue.

Sue

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Duke Lacrosse: Ethical Reflections

Written by Rusty Wright

The Duke lacrosse story has multiple ingredients for explosive

media coverage: sex, race, politics, criminal charges, sports, class, a prestigious institution the list goes on.

Like many Duke alumni, I have personal convictions about the scandal. My Duke experience was and remains positive. So I'm biased. But I'm also realistic. Houston, we have a problem.

As much of the civilized world knows, a hired African-American stripper alleged some white players raped her at a lacrosse party. The accuser attended nearby North Carolina Central University. The accused maintain their innocence. The lacrosse coach resigned. Duke cancelled the season.

During basketball season, it was often "All Duke, all the time" on America's sports pages. Through much of the Spring, it became "All Duke, all the time" on the front pages.

Nowadays at Duke, quips one professor, historical calendars are not reckoned "BC" and "AD" but "BLC" and "ALC." "Before the Lacrosse Crisis" and "After the Lacrosse Crisis."

I'm glad Duke President Richard Broadhead emphasizes the presumption of innocence in criminal law. Travels in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have exposed me to chilling stories about presuming guilt.

At an April reunion, I found the campus buzzing with controversy. Some students conveyed deep personal pain about race and gender issues. At their national tournament in May, Duke women lacrosse players wore wristbands and headbands supporting the men's team.

Broadhead commissioned an ongoing Campus Culture Initiative emphasizing responsibility and respect. In my view, he's handled a difficult situation with exceptional grace, dignity, and transparency.

What ethical lessons might come from this episode? Of course, if rape occurred, punishment should ensue.

But setting aside the rape allegations, what about the ethics of hiring a stripper? What principles should determine how we act in life?

When I was an undergraduate, a friend from the fraternity next door excitedly told me the dean had just given his fraternity permission to host a topless dancer at their Saturday night party in university housing.

Fast forward to 2006. On one television program, a woman argued that her own stripping had paid her college bills, and besides, it allowed her to exercise power over men.

Suppose you were a Duke student. Should you host or attend such a party? Hiring a stripper broke no laws. Both the players and the young woman could claim benefit. What's the harm?

A pragmatist might maintain, "In retrospect, it was more trouble than it was worth." A libertarian might assert, "Stripping's OK, if no one gets hurt." Some absolutists might say, "No. Never." Feminists could argue either side. Stripping exploits women as sex objects, a negative cultural influence. Yet a woman needs to earn a living.

Duke ethicist Elizabeth Kiss, soon to become Agnes Scott College president, recommends a starting point for answering the classic question, "How should I act?" She notes that the "[Golden Rule](#)" appears in various forms in different faith traditions.

Good point. Jesus said, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you."

The Jewish Talmud says, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor."

Muhammad said, "Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself."

On Duke's main quadrangle sits a [plaque](#) containing the first article of the university's bylaws. The statement promotes truth, scholarship, freedom, tolerance, and service. It begins as follows:

"The aims of Duke University are to assert a faith in the eternal union of knowledge and religion set forth in the teachings and character of Jesus Christ, the Son of God..."

Hmmm. An ethical guideline worth considering?

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When the Good Guys Don't Win

Pop! Pow! Gunfire crackled from the house next door. My neighbor John, high on marijuana, was shooting at his friend who crouched in fear behind a corner of the building. No one was injured and the arrival of police calmed John down.

That's strange, I thought to myself another sunny morning as I left my home to jog. *Why would my car windshield be covered with ice crystals? It's July.* As I drew nearer, I realized the "ice crystals" were broken glass, courtesy of some Fourth-of-July vandals.

Fear, confusion, anger, helplessness. Life can seem out of

control when we are violated. Each nighttime creak could be an intruder. Were the walls thick enough to stop bullets should John's cannabis exploits resume? What did I do to deserve this?

An alleged rape victim feels cheated when the DA refuses to prosecute the accused perpetrators. A medical exam showed rape trauma; two reliable eyewitnesses saw her pushed partially clad down some stairs and heard her screams for help. "It seems to me that I am the one on trial," she complains in frustration. A rape is the only crime where the victims are treated with disrespect."[\[1\]](#) An African-American mother says she's paranoid that her well-behaved teenage son will be falsely suspected of being a criminal because of his race. Fear and fury drive her to nag him before he goes to the store: "Keep your hands out of your pockets. Don't reach under your shirt. If there's an itch, just live with it. In winter, keep your jacket open."[\[2\]](#)

Terrorist Massacre

Members of a multi-racial Cape Town, South Africa, church were enjoying a beautiful duet when the front door burst open. Terrorists sprayed the congregation with automatic rifle fire and tossed in two grenades, leaving 11 dead and 53 wounded. Lorenzo Smith pulled his wife, Myrtle, to the floor and lay on top of her to protect her. The second grenade exploded 6 feet away, sending a piece of shrapnel into her left side near her heart but missing him entirely. She died en route to a hospital.

"You're no longer working here," the personnel chief informs the career employee. The stellar worker had ruffled feathers by challenging ethical and financial misconduct of several company officers. Instead of applauding his integrity, the company showed him the door. Whistle blowing can be lonely.

Palestinians find their homes bulldozed. Israeli shoppers are

massacred by suicide bombers in a crowded marketplace. Rwandans are maimed and slaughtered in tribal violence.

Bad things sometimes (often?) happen to good or seemingly innocent people. What should be done? How can the victims cope?

First, recognize where the problem stems from.

Why Suffering?

“Why is there suffering in the world?” ranked first in a national survey to determine the top 40 questions of life.[\[3\]](#) Many human efforts to alleviate suffering and achieve happiness have borne some fruit, but each also contains examples of failure. Consider a few:

Psychology. Many psychologists offer hope based purely on human resources. Still, sometimes even the best and brightest give up in despair. Legendary psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim, who used his own survival of Nazi horrors to help heal others, eventually took his own life. Upon learning of his suicide, one colleague remarked, “It was as if the [psychological] profession itself had failed.”[\[4\]](#)

Marxism. Pointing at class antagonism as the culprit, Marxism aimed to create a “New Man” in a harmonious society devoid of such antagonism. Instead, it created an elite “Rich Man” as party chiefs lived in luxury while the masses remained disillusioned. “Workers of the World, We Apologize,” read the Moscow demonstrators’ banner as the Soviet Union crumbled.[\[5\]](#) Today’s Cubans eat lots of bananas and ride bicycles. North Koreans starve.

Capitalism. Is this political theory the answer? The market economy has raised standards of living, yet even nations like the United States boil with crime, racism, sexual discrimination and homelessness

Could we be missing the root of the problem? Could much human suffering be rooted in something deeper than flawed political systems or philosophical constructs? Could there be something wrong with the human heart?

Heart Disease?

History is replete with confirming evidence. A United Nations conference on the role of the university in the search for world peace ended early because “the delegates began quarreling too vociferously.”^[6] Various attempts to establish utopian societies with uniform equality have crumbled due to internal strife.

“Everybody thinks of changing humanity,” noted Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, “but nobody thinks of changing himself.”^[7] Simon Bolivar, the great liberator of Latin America, admitted in his later years, “I was all my life a slave to my passions. The essence of liberty is precisely that one can liberate oneself.”^[8]

“We have met the enemy,” announced the comic strip character Pogo, “and he is us.”

If, then, we live in a flawed world with people determined to live out their own inner sicknesses, what can we do? How do we cope with the resulting, unjust suffering? “Seek justice” was a North Carolina woman’s strategy as she recently sued her husband’s lover for destroying her marriage, winning a million-dollar settlement. Sometimes the right cause prevails in court. Often, though, both sides end up bitter and poorer.

Are there any other solutions? Anything that works?

- **Choose to look out for others.** In a commencement address at Duke University, ABC News commentator Ted Koppel said: “Maimonides and Jesus summed it up in almost identical words: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor

as thyself,' 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'"[{9}](#) After Hurricane Andrew devastated parts of Miami, I returned to my hometown to help rebuild. I was amazed to discover that thousands of volunteers from around North America had come at their own expense to help the poor reconstruct their homes. Most were with Christian mission organizations, motivated as Good Samaritans by their love of God and love of people.

- **Lessen the pain by sharing it.** During a particularly trying episode in my own life, my best friend deserted me, some trusted co-workers betrayed me, and my health and finances suffered. Close friends and my faith helped me emerge wounded but growing. Building friendships takes time and effort. Initiating communication, offering to help another move or to carpool, listening to hurts, offering a compliment or word of encouragement . . . all can help build strong bonds. Giving often motivates others to respond in kind. "Bearing one another's burdens" can make them lighter for both of you when you each need it.
- **Eliminate bitter roots.** Asking and/or granting forgiveness can help heal hearts. As Alabama governor, George Wallace preached "Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!" Two decades in a wheelchair gave him time to reflect on life, suffering and God. He eventually confessed his wrongs and asked forgiveness of his former racial and political enemies. South African Lorenzo Smith, who lost his wife to the grenade in church, turned and forgave his wife's murderers. "Bearing a grudge can corrode your soul," affirmed one wounded warrior. "If you nurse bitterness and refuse to forgive, it can keep you in bondage to your enemies. If you let it go and forgive regardless of your opponent's response you're free."

When the good guys don't win, you can curse the darkness. Or

you can recognize the root problem and light a candle. May yours shine brightly.

Notes

1. "Was it rape? Woman in G.T. case speaks out," *The Sun* (San Bernardino, CA), August 28, 1997, A12.

2. Deborah Mathis, "Stereotypes can leave Black mothers paranoid for sons," *The Sun* (San Bernardino, CA), August 27, 1997, A9.

3. What are the Top 40 Questions of Life?" advertisement by Thomas Nelson Publishers in *USA Today*, ca. late 1980s or 1990.

4. Celeste Fremon, "Love and Death," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, January 27, 1991, pp. 17-21, 35.

5. *Newsweek*. November 20, 1989, p. 11.

6. *Miami News*. September 4, 1969.

7. *World Christian/U* February 1989, p. U8.

8. Selden Rodman, "The Conqueror's Descent," *National Review*. October 15, 1990, p. 88.

9. Ted Koppel, "The Vannatizing of America," *DUKE Magazine*, July/August 1987, p 36 (with biblical references from Matthew 19:19 and Luke 6:31).

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Feminist Myths

As someone who works in the media, I am well aware that certain myths get started and have a life of their own. A number of these myths are promoted and disseminated by feminists and can be found in the book *Who Stole Feminism?* The author, Christina Hoff Sommers, though a feminist, has been concerned for some time about the prominence of these myths and does a masterful job tracing down the origin of each and setting the record straight. If you want more information on any of these, I would recommend you obtain her well-documented book.

Myth of the Extent of Anorexia Nervosa

In her book *Revolution from Within*, Gloria Steinem informed her readers that “in this country alone...about 150,000 females die of anorexia each year.” To put this dramatic statistic in perspective, this is more than three times the annual number of fatalities from car accidents for the total population. The only problem with the statistic is that it is absolutely false.

Lest you think that this was a mere typographical error, consider the following. The statistic also appears in the feminist best- seller *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf. “How,” she asks, “would America react to the mass self-immolation by hunger of its favorite sons?” While admitting that “nothing justifies comparison with the Holocaust,” she nevertheless makes just such a comparison. “When confronted with a vast number of emaciated bodies starved not by nature but by men, one must notice a certain resemblance.”

What was the source of this statistic? Ms. Wolf got her figures from *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease* by Joan Brumberg, a historian and former director of women’s studies at Cornell University. It turns

out that she misquoted the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association which had stated that there are 150,000 to 200,000 sufferers (not fatalities) of anorexia nervosa. The actual figure is many orders of magnitude lower. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, there were 70 deaths from anorexia in 1990. Even 70 deaths is tragic, but 70 deaths out of population of over 100 million women can hardly be considered a holocaust.

Apparently Naomi Wolf plans to revise her figures in an updated version of *The Beauty Myth*, but the figure is now widely accepted as true. Ann Landers repeated it in her 1992 column by stating that "every year, 150,000 American women die from complications associated with anorexia and bulimia." The false statistic has also made it into college textbooks. A women's studies text, aptly titled *The Knowledge Explosion*, contains the erroneous figure in its preface.

Myth of Amount of Domestic Violence

On November 1992, Deborah Louis, president of the National Women's Studies Association, sent a message to the Women's Studies Electronic Bulletin Board. It read, "According to [the] last March of Dimes report, domestic violence (vs. pregnant women) is now responsible for more birth defects than all other causes combined." On February 23, 1993, Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, said on the Charlie Rose program that "battery of pregnant women is the number one cause of birth defects in this country."

Certainly unsettling data. But again, the biggest problem is that the statistic is absolutely false. The March of Dimes never published the study and did not know of any research that corroborated the statement.

Nevertheless, journalists willingly recited the erroneous statistic. The *Boston Globe* reported that "domestic violence

is the leading cause of birth defects, more than all other medical causes combined, according to a March of Dimes study." The *Dallas Morning News* reported that "the March of Dimes has concluded that the battering of women during pregnancy causes more birth defects than all the diseases put together for which children are usually immunized."

When *Time* magazine published essentially the same article, the rumor started spinning out of control. Concerned citizens and legislators called the March of Dimes for the study. Eventually the error was traced to Sarah Buel, a founder of the domestic violence advocacy project at Harvard Law School. She misunderstood a statement made by a nurse who noted that a March of Dimes study showed that more women are screened for birth defects than they are for domestic battery. The nurse never said anything about battery causing birth defects.

Although we could merely chalk this error up to a misunderstanding, it is disturbing that so many newspapers and magazines reported it uncritically. Battery causing birth defects? More than genetic disorders like spina bifida, Downs syndrome, Tay-Sachs, sickle-cell anemia? More than alcohol, crack, or AIDS? Where was the press in checking the facts? Why are feminist myths so easily repeated in the press?

Myth of Increased Domestic Battery on Super Bowl Sunday

In January 1993 newspaper and television networks reported an alarming statistic. They stated that the incidence of domestic violence tended to rise by 40 percent on Super Bowl Sunday. NBC, which was broadcasting the game, made a special plea for men to stay calm. Feminists called for emergency preparations in anticipation of the expected increase in violence.

Feminists also used the occasion to link maleness and violence against women. Nancy Isaac, a Harvard School of Public Health research associate specializing in domestic violence, told the

Boston Globe: "It's a day for men to revel in their maleness and unfortunately, for a lot of men that includes being violent toward women if they want to be."

Nearly every journalist accepted the 40 percent figure—except for Ken Ringle at the *Washington Post*. He checked the facts and was able to expose the myth, but not before millions of Americans were indoctrinated with the feminist myth of male aggression during Super Bowl Sunday.

Myth Concerning Percent of Women Raped

The Justice Department says that 8 percent of all American women will be victims of rape or attempted rape in their lifetime. Feminist legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon, however, claims that rape happens to almost half of all women at least once in their lives.

Who is right? Obviously, the difference between these two statistics stems from a number of factors ranging from under-reporting to very different definitions of rape. The Justice Department figure is obviously low since it is based on the number of cases reported to the police, and rape is the most under-reported of crimes.

The feminist figures are artificially high because they use very broad definitions of rape and let the questioner rather than the victim decide whether there was a rape or not. The two most frequently cited studies are the 1985 *Ms.* magazine study and the 1992 National Women's Study. The *Ms.* magazine study of 3,000 college students gave a statistic of about 1 in 4 for women who have been raped or victim of an attempted rape. However, the study used very broad definitions of rape which sometimes included kissing, fondling, and other activities that few people would call rape. In fact, only 27 percent of those women counted as having been raped actually labeled themselves as rape victims. Also, 42 percent of those counted as rape victims went on to have sex with their

“attackers” on a later occasion.

The National Women’s Study released a figure of 1 in 8 women who have been raped. Again the surveyors used extremely broad, expanded definitions of rape that allowed the surveyor to decide if a woman had been raped or not.

The statistics for “date rape” and rape on campus have also been exaggerated. Camille Paglia warns that “date rape has swelled into a catastrophic cosmic event, like an asteroid threatening the earth in a fifties science-fiction film.” Contrast this with the date- rape hype on most college campuses that includes rallies, marches, and date-rape counseling groups.

Peter Hellman, writing for New York magazine on the subject of rape on campus, was surprised to find that campus police logs at Columbia University showed no evidence of rape on campus. Only two rapes were reported to the Columbia campus police, and in both cases, the charges were dropped for lack of evidence. Hellman checked figures for other campuses and found fewer than .5 rapes per campus. He also found that public monies were being spent disproportionately on campus rape programs while community rape programs were scrambling for dollars.

The high rape numbers serve gender feminists by promoting the belief that American culture is sexist and misogynist. They also help liberal politicians by providing justification for additional funding for social services. Senator Joseph Biden introduced the Violence Against Women Act to “raise the consciousness of the American public.” He argues that violence against women is much like racial violence and calls for civil as well as criminal remedies.

Myth Concerning Female Self-esteem

In 1991, newspapers around the country proclaimed that the

self-esteem of teenage girls was falling. The *New York Times* announced, "Little girls lose their self-esteem on way to adolescence, study finds."

The study was commissioned by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to measure self-esteem of girls and boys between the ages of nine and fifteen. Their poll seemed to show that between the ages of eleven and sixteen, girls experience a dramatic drop in self-esteem, which in turn significantly affects their ability to learn and to achieve. The report made headlines around the country and led to hundreds of conferences and community action projects.

Here is how the AAUW summarized the results of the survey in their brochure: In a crucial measure of self-esteem, 60 percent of elementary school girls and 69 percent of elementary school boys say they are "happy the way I am." But, by high school, girls' self-esteem falls 31 points to only 29 percent, while boys' self-esteem falls only 23 points to 46 percent.

Girls are less likely than boys to say they are "pretty good at a lot of things." Less than a third of girls express this confidence, compared to almost half the boys. A 10-point gender gap in confidence in their abilities increases to 19 points in high school.

It turns out that the report didn't even define the term self-esteem, or even promote an informal discussion of what the authors meant by it. Other researchers suspect that the apparent gap in self-esteem may merely reflect a gap in expressiveness. Girls and women are more aware of their feelings and more articulate in expressing them, and so they are more candid about their negative emotions in self-reports than males are.

When asked if they are "good at a lot of things," boys more often answered, "all the time," whereas girls, being more

reflective, gave more nuanced answers (“some of the time” or “usually”). Although the surveyors decided that the girls’ response showed poor self-esteem, it may merely reflect a “maturity gap” between boys and girls. Boys, lacking maturity, reflectiveness, and humility, are more likely to answer the question as “always true.”

Myth of Discrimination Against Females in School

An American Association of University Women (AAUW) report argued that schools and teachers were biased against girls in the classroom. *The Wellesley Report*, published in 1992, argued that there was a gender bias in education. The *Boston Globe* proclaimed that “from the very first days in school, American girls face a drum-fire of gender bias, ranging from sexual harassment to discrimination in the curriculum to lack of attention from teachers, according to a survey released today in Washington.” The release of this study was again followed by great media attention and the convening of conferences. It also provided the intellectual ammunition for the “Gender Equity in Education” bill introduced in 1993 by Patricia Schroeder, Susan Molinari, and others. It would have established a permanent and well-funded gender equity bureaucracy.

Are women really being damaged by our school system? Today 55 percent of college students are female, and women receive 52 percent of the bachelor’s degrees. Yes, girls seem somewhat behind in math and science, but those math and science test differentials are small compared with the large differentials favoring girls in reading and writing.

The study also assumed that teachers’ verbal interactions with students indicated how much they valued them. The surveyors therefore deduced that teachers valued boys more than girls. However, teachers often give more attention to boys because

they are more immature and require the teacher to keep them in line. Most girls, being more mature, don't want the attention or verbal discipline and need less negative attention to get their work done.

Myth of Huge Gender Wage Gap

A major rallying cry during the debates on comparable worth was that women make 59 cents for every dollar men do. The figure is now 71 cents. But if you factor in age, length of time in the workplace, and type of job, the wage gap is much smaller for younger women. Those with children tend to make slightly less than those without children, but it's closer to 90 cents.

Feminists argue that the pay gap is a vivid illustration of discrimination. Economists argue that it's due to shorter work weeks and less workplace experience. It is no doubt also due to the kind of jobs women choose. Women generally prefer clean, safe places with predictable hours and less stress. The more dangerous, dirty, and high-pressure jobs generally appeal to men. This is reflected in salary differences.