



Village Bible Church

Our response to the organization

**AHA – Abolish Human Abortion
and their agitation strategies.**

**Where we are aligned and
where we disagree.**

Written by Timothy Badal

Why this distinctive?

Recently our church had a group of individuals protesting the mission and ministry of VBC. Considering our times, this type of protest should be expected and assumed. And yet what was so surprising about this recent protest was the people doing it. The protestors were not individuals who seek to stop the cause of Christ and his Gospel, but instead were self-professing believers seeking to rebuke our church for its apathy and total and utter disregard for human life. The church was being protested not by unbelievers and skeptics but those who say they are speaking as prophets of God to a corrupt church. The purpose of this document is to address the following points: First and foremost, to clearly and boldly articulate our position on human life and the cancer that abortion is to our society and country; second, to identify and educate our church family regarding what we believe is a harmful and abrasive group of self-professing Christians who are waging war on the church; third, to explain the differences we have with this group and the harm we believe this movement has had and is having in our fight for the unborn; finally, to share with all our attenders and members the different ways our church is engaging in the fight to protect life now and in the days to come.

The Sanctity of Life

Within our Life and Faith Distinctive is the following commitment to life...

Procreation is a gift from God, a precious trust reserved for marriage. At the moment of conception, a new being enters the universe, a human being, a being created in God's image. This human being deserves our protection, whatever the circumstances of conception.

Inherent within this statement are some important truths that confront some of the grievous actions of the sinful world around us.

Biblical revelation clearly and consistently affirms that human life is formed by God in His image. Therefore, all life everywhere is worthy of honor and dignity (Genesis 1:27; 9:6).

God alone is the Author of life and He alone numbers our days, from the moment of conception until natural death (Job 14:5–7; Psalm 39:4).

The Bible commands us to honor our parents and the aged (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:32; Ephesians 6:2).

The Bible affirms that “children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord” and calls us to “speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.”

Instead of following God and His Word, our culture has redefined life and created choices for human beings that attack the plans and purposes of God. This has led to the following¹:

Our nation has seen a holocaust of an estimated fifty-seven million unborn babies aborted since the legalization of abortion in 1973 (Roe v. Wade).

¹ <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2256/on-the-sanctity-of-human-life>

Our nation has disregarded the elderly and vulnerable through legislation or court rulings that have effectively legalized physician-assisted suicide in many states.

Our nation has sought to force Christians to act against their consciences through recent federal directives seeking to compel religious organizations and individuals to provide or pay for coverage of abortifacient technologies and services.

Because of the great divide between what our world says regarding the dignity and respect of human life and what is clearly articulated in the Scriptures, we affirm the following so that no one can be mistaken about our position for human life whether at conception or the end of life²:

We repudiate the genocide of legalized abortion in the United States and call on civil authorities to enact laws that defend the lives of the unborn.

We welcome and commend legislation that ensures that all mothers will be fully informed by medical providers of the life development of their unborn children.

We see the importance of preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God's Word regarding cultural issues that may seem intolerant or offensive to those who see life as a choice or a human-assisted death as a viable option.

We call on our fellow citizens of good will to collaborate with us on behalf of justice, the protection of human life, and the cause of human flourishing.

We encourage continued and expanding partnerships with local ministries that care for and protect the unborn, the vulnerable, and the aged.

We call on all our members to show the love of Christ through appropriate means to those women most vulnerable to the victimization of the abortion industry, and to show grace and mercy to those individuals who grieve with repentance over past abortions.

We call on all our believers to care for the elderly among us, to show them honor and dignity, and to prayerfully support and counsel those who are providing end-of-life care for the aged, the terminally ill, and the chronically infirmed.

We commend the efforts of those who seek to join with us in the defense and protection of human life at every stage.

We will continue to pray and work for the repeal of unjust laws and inhumane practices that degrade any and all human life, all the while looking toward the day when our Lord will make all things new and "Death will no longer exist; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

² <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2256/on-the-sanctity-of-human-life>

AHA (Abolish Human Abortion): Are they with us or against us?

For those who are unfamiliar with AHA³ (Abolish Human Abortion), it is a ministry that stands for the abolition of human abortion. The name itself speaks about something we should all be supportive of, which is the complete eradication of human abortions in our land and throughout the world. The Bible indeed calls us to speak against and expose the darkness in our world (Ephesians 5:11).

However, a recent set of encounters with this group has caused us great consternation concerning the group itself. Although slated as a Christ-centered ministry, their seeming incessant and impenitent practice of protesting outside of churches has relegated this ministry to the fringe groups that leech onto the church of God and often cause great harm in the process. They claim to want to work with other churches, and yet their approach is to break down the doors of your church, overturn the tables, and call the entire church to repent of not being involved in abortion ministry to their satisfaction.

If they feel that your church is not doing enough to stop abortion by adopting their tactics and strategies, you are a target for AHA. Instead of choosing to show charity and love toward other believers by engaging in a dialog to seek common ground, they show up unannounced outside of your church to protest with their signs, and then go inside the church building to hand out information to church attenders. These tactics are not motivated by love or transparency but seek to use deception to sneak in unnoticed by the local church elders who have been given charge to protect the flock from such people. This brazen approach to engaging the church comes from a belief that they have a prophetic ministry and thus a prophetic message for every church until each one complies with their demands. This is probably why you cannot find a single reputable, respected, evangelical pastor who supports them. While there are thousands of evangelical churches that seek to protect life at all stages—including the unborn—very few, if any, are willing to align themselves with a ministry that is known for such disruption and division.

Because of these elements, AHA is a coalition that is filled with controversy, divisiveness, and unbiblical anti-institutional and anti-church practices; some of their adherents do not even attend or submit to the authority of any church. In fact, many of their adherents would rather pledge their allegiance to AHA rather than their local church. They determine whether they will even attend a church or become members based on where the church stands regarding the movement. There is a consistent pattern of speaking against the local church, undermining the authority of the local church, and failure to identify with a local church, which is a path to apostasy (Hebrews 10:25–26). Of course, the Christian life is to be lived out in the context of the local church, its auspices, and its execution of proper Church polity including church membership, the ordinances, the proclamation of the Gospel, and Church discipline.

Our brief exposure to this movement has already yielded many troubling facts that result from involvement with AHA. Some of them include churches being divided, friendships being broken, individuals being isolated from friends and family, and even controlled by others in the movement being told that they need to be doing more. They make a person feel as if a move away from AHA is a move away from the gospel. The problem with the AHA movement is that these types of testimonies abound,

³ <http://abolishhumanabortion.com/>

and the deeper one investigates, the worse it gets. Our interactions with local AHA leadership are consistent with what is shared by pastors all over the county, which is any attempt to reason with AHA “leadership” is met with a clearly low view regarding the authority of the local church. As a result of the loose affiliation there is no real place to share concerns or complaints when offended by AHA and their tactics. Furthermore, AHA has no control over those who associate with it, which only compounds the toxicity of this group. For these reasons and more, while AHA has elements that we might hold in common, our differences and their approach to ministry make AHA a ministry that we cannot endorse in any form or fashion and, in fact, would strongly warn our members to reject completely.

Actions speak louder than words ⁴

AHA is wrought with people who hold to questionable theology. AHA, as a movement, has no way to hold its adherents accountable for their theological errors and their actions, nor does it appear that there is any desire to do so. We must approach the sin in a biblical, evangelical-minded way. Some points that need to be recognized area as follows:

Hypocrisy. Though AHA has staunchly denied this accusation, the evidence is clear that AHA has set an arbitrary line on what is acceptable and what isn’t. They are hiding behind the motto of “repent with us,” but this means “we’ve already repented, now it’s your turn.” They complain about others putting things ahead of the mortal urgency of seeing abortion abolished, yet when asked by pastors and elders to dialog about ways of partnership, AHA turned down the offer. The only way to be with them is to join them lock, stock, and barrel with no questions asked. This type of group thinking and no questions allowed smacks of cult tendencies and has no place for any believer to engage in.

Pragmatism. It is true that taking care of the orphan and widow and meeting the needs of the poor are biblical commands, but there is a theologically appropriate way to approach this. The great commission of the church is, first and foremost, to make disciples. This means preaching the gospel to the lost and discipling the saved, teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded us (Matthew 28:16–20). That includes fighting abortion. But the lack of sound theological clarity has removed AHA from the realm of evangelical disciple-making to a pragmatic approach of abortion abolition at any cost, including the compromising of the gospel.

Village Bible church has been uncompromisingly clear on its stance against abortion and its commitment to spreading the Gospel. AHA believes that the only method for ending abortion is to drop every other aspect of ministry and go full force in front of the murder mills and join them in Church Repent projects. But if AHA were true to its statement that “we are at war with the worldview that makes abortion acceptable to begin with,” then they would see that Village Bible Church and many other solid, Gospel-preaching, Bible-believing churches they regularly mock, protest, and attack are just as faithfully, if not

⁴ All sub points under this heading come from an article written by Jeff Maples with some modifications this article can be found at <http://pulpitandpen.org/2016/08/22/aha-and-the-defamation-of-the-brideof-christ/>

more faithfully, doing the work of Christ as they are. Taking the Gospel to the lost is by far the best method of fighting the worldview that makes abortion acceptable.

Unfruitful Tactics. The Scriptures are clear that the fruits of our works are evidence of our biblical practice (Matthew 7:16). It is true that the Word of God is a double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12), and it does create divisions (Matthew 10:34–37). As proclaimers of the Gospel we are no strangers to the division truth can bring, but the continual tirade against a church that bears much fruit, rejects false teachings and false gospels, and never partners with those who hold to them, is an affront to the bride of Christ and does damage to the Gospel. One area of dishonest and unfruitful tactics that AHA utilizes is the deceptive act of secretly filming their encounters with people. In their recent visit to our church a nearly 16-minute running video is taken as they bait individuals into arguments.⁵ This inciting is part and parcel to their mission and purpose. They have no interest in their visits to interact with church leaders. Instead they seek to do an end around leadership to prey upon the unsuspecting members of a local congregation. Throughout the New Testament we see these type of tactics and strategies employed by false teachers. Sadly, when one's tactics are deceptive any message that is shared by them is contaminated.

Slander. We believe that AHA is slandering Village Bible Church and all other gospel-centered churches it protests. While we don't know the intentions of everyone who is involved, it has been clear in our encounter with AHA members that they seek to bring a black eye to the church and desire to cause confusion to our community about where we stand on the issue of life. This is slander, and we should have no partnership with those who seek to slander the church instead of privately and lovingly approaching church leaders to discuss our differences. The approach of AHA is to give those who don't know any better the impression that Village Bible Church does not support, or is apathetic to, the protection of life. This is simply false and holds no biblical weight.

Can we agree with them on anything?

The basic message of the movement is worth interacting with. Do biblical churches have a mandate to stand in front of abortion mills or else risk being unfaithful to the gospel? Or even more precisely, do biblical churches have a mandate to approach abortion ministry to the same degree and in the same way that AHA is telling us we must?

There is some common ground that VBC can have with this movement. First, like AHA we see abortion as murder—something that should be abolished. Second, we see the need not to simply believe something but to act upon that belief. Third, we believe that our actions in the struggle against abortion may cause us to look intolerant and even at times unloving to people in need. Finally, we agree that the church needs to be continually challenged not to grow weary in doing good nor to close our eyes to the many different atrocities that surround us today. While we can agree with AHA on the previous points, there are too many differences in the spirit and strategy of the AHA movement, and these come from our understanding of the purpose and mandate of the local church and its ministry to the world around it.

⁵ After speaking to the AHA protester about his deceptive practices of wearing a hidden camera he agreed to delete the video from Facebook. While this video is no longer online there are many such videos in churches easily accessed online.

The mandate of the local church⁶

The mandate of the church is to follow the commands given by our Lord and His apostles. Although part of outreach is to expose darkness, which includes abortion and other evil practices (something we do regularly at our church), being engulfed solely in a church-wide abortion ministry causes us to be shortsighted and deficient in the church's call to preach the whole council of God's Word (Acts 20:27). Neither does it fulfill the last words of Jesus to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19–20). So, if that is not to be the primary focus of the church, what is? The answer is as simple as you may think. While there are great singular evils in the world that the devil uses to deceive and enslave the multitudes, we have one calling: proclaim the gospel to every nation and teach them all that God commands us through His Word.

Of course, God so wisely gave us a mandate in Scripture, and that is for the gospel proclamation to be central. And what is the central message of the Gospel? **The Cross!** It is not alleviating human suffering; it is pointing us to the One who suffered. Only the cross has the power to change a murderer into a saint (1 Corinthians 6:9–11). Only the cross has the power to change the hearts of individuals within a culture, and it is under the great sovereignty of God that we will see a change in that culture to whatever degree God ordains. Our mission as the church is to herald the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Abortion ministry, like all other ministries, is a means to that end, not the reverse. This is the fatal flaw in all social gospel models; they make the cross a stepping-stone to the “real work” of alleviating social ills. But of course, the greatest social ill of all is not the fact that image bearers are being put to death, but that image bearers are going to hell and are under the wrath of God—something we are powerless to change. That is why the gospel is the power of God to salvation (Romans 1:16).

Sadly, the people of AHA seem incapable of having a single conversation without talking about abortion, and our concern is that they avoid addressing other sins listed in the Bible that are just as reprehensible as abortion, such as human trafficking and slavery. Although AHA likes to cite James 1:27, there is no evidence whatsoever that they have a ministry to orphans or widows. One has to ask a couple of questions: Where are AHA's orphanages? Where are their facilities for housing widows? When a ministry engages in this sort of deep hypocrisy, it completely discredits the entirety of the ministry.

Claiming that the church is not doing enough about abortion is right, because the church is not doing enough about any other social justice or moral issues either. The church is not doing enough about world hunger; the church is not doing enough about poverty; the church is not doing enough about prostitution, sex trafficking, child abuse, molestation, rape, drunkenness, tyranny, communism, or fascism. These are not reminders of the church's failure; these are reminders that the focus of the church is something greater! It was the fact that Paul had preached the whole counsel of God (especially in the context of the church!) that he no longer had blood on his hands (Acts 20:26). In the same way, if we preach the all-sufficient Gospel of Jesus Christ to a dead and dying culture, we too can have the assurance that we have done what God requires and what glorifies Him the most. Sadly, the AHA tosses

⁶ Thanks to Pastor Emilio Ramos for his clarity when responding to similar protests at his church.

<http://redgracemedia.com/%E2%80%8Baha-and-the-sufficiency-of-the-gospel/>

sound doctrine aside for a movement of social justice instead of the Gospel-centered work that they profess to uphold.

While we are not opposed to calling our church to repent of apathy—in fact, as we proclaim often from our pulpits, we believe that many Christians are largely apathetic. We would also disagree with those who might say that other sins or social justice issues are equally grave and important. Not to write off other issues as unimportant, but we strongly believe that destruction and degradation of human life in all its forms is a *top* priority over other social ills and political issues because it is the *only* sin against humanity that a.) is legal, b.) is celebrated in our culture, and c.) directly and immediately takes the lives of innocent children and harms the most vulnerable among us. That is why the ministry of Village Bible Church devotes energy and finances to ministries and partners to combat the murder and marginalizing of human life both here and abroad. These ministries are producing a breadth and depth that far surpass AHA. Through our efforts we are seeing the protection of human life against numerous enemies and reaping incredible blessings. We have seen firsthand how God is using our humble attempts to change the world.

AHA, while seemingly desiring to do good in bringing an end to a great evil, has become a distraction to the work of the Great Commission. It shall be the official position of Village Bible Church that this type of behavior against the bride of Christ should be repudiated and not supported. While we can still stand with some of the ideology that AHA holds, we can never be seen to support an attack against Biblebelieving and Gospel-preaching churches. Our prayer for them is to see that the Gospel calls and compels us to address and equip the body beyond one evil, to address man's sin as the root of all evil in the world, and to proclaim the gospel of Christ, which is the only remedy for all sin and is truly the greatest need our world faces.

Where do we go from here?

If AHA is misguided and unbalanced in their strategy to protect the unborn, what is the approach of VBC? Surely our church should have a plan to stem the tide and not simply criticize the attempts of others. For some time now VBC has sought to love our neighbors by serving them both in temporal and spiritual ways. The calling to make disciples is lifelong and so is our stand against the varying evils in the world. While the calling to protect human life is a massive endeavor, we seek to continue to employ a step-by-step holistic and truly biblical approach to mobilizing the church to speak and act against the enormous loss of life both here and abroad. We have invested in these efforts because we believe that they are the single greatest way to stem the tide. To that end we are committed to the following steps:

Understand the situation

Why does our church tolerate the demonstrators on our property?

The same First Amendment that gives Christians the right to share our faith and to petition our government also gives demonstrators outside of our church the right to stand on an easement on our property and hold up gruesome pictures of aborted babies. We are grateful for our First Amendment liberties. Of course, there are limits to any constitutional right. We are particularly

concerned about the traffic and safety hazards posed by the demonstrators' distracting tactics. We are examining legal remedies to remove the demonstrators. At all times, we are called by Jesus to love people regardless of whether we like them, or whether we like their methods or their message.

What should you do if a demonstrator harasses you or a family member?

Immediately contact one of our pastors in our church building and allow us to handle the matter. Do not get into verbal or physical confrontations with the demonstrators. Not only would this be unsafe, but it would be a poor witness to our Lord, who calls us to love people regardless of how they treat us. We are committed to your safety and the safety of your family. Just ignore them! Pray for a peaceful resolution to this demonstration! Pray that people will not be confused and our witness of Christ will not be harmed by this

Get Educated

There is a great deal that goes under this heading. For starters, we need to start putting out more information on abortion. We need to let women know what occurs in an abortion. We need to let them know about the emotional and physical consequences of an abortion. We need to let them know what constitutes life. We need to let them know that there are other options besides abortion. And, of course, we need to let them know what God thinks about abortion. But we also need to realize that many times when someone is considering an abortion, they are not thinking about what God thinks about abortion. They are thinking about the loss of sexual freedom, the fears of single motherhood, or the cost of raising a child.

As the church we have to do our best at transforming how our communities view life, birth, motherhood, and children. We must be willing to put money and time into using all of the modern tools that we have available to us in the 21st century. We are going to have to make ministry to the younger culture (which will make up the majority of those considering abortion) a priority if we desire to win their hearts through the gospel.

We also have to be willing to help educate single mothers. Many of those who are considering abortions are stuck in a cycle of dependency and low-income situations. We need to be willing to use the strengths of the church to train single mothers in specific job training areas, financial planning, and homemaking— isn't that what older women are instructed to help younger women with (Titus 2:3-5)? Are we willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary to help these young women rise to the occasion and take on the mantle of motherhood? Are we also willing to work with young men who are encouraging their girlfriends to get an abortion and show them what it means to be a father and a man? Many of these young men didn't have father figures to train them—are we willing to step up to this challenge?

Partner with us to protect life

We partner with ministries of all kinds that have impacts around the globe. Why? Because there is a good cause and purpose for all of those ministries and a vast difference in the needs of those whom they serve. We believe that there is a legitimate reason to pour the church's funds into these ministries. When it comes to the scourge of abortion, is there not a cause? The church needs to continue actively engaging with pro-life ministries in our communities. Ministries like PIC offer free pregnancy testing,

sonograms, and counseling to all impacted by the threat of abortion. We see the great possibility of innocent lives being saved and doors that are opened for the Gospel through this ministry. We need to come together with other churches to support pro-life ministries that can serve those most affected by abortion.

Think about the many faces of adoption

We leave this for last because we realize that this is the most difficult and requires the greatest sacrifice for the church. Are we really willing to make that kind of sacrifice to save the life of even one child? Maybe so. As children who have been adopted into God's family, can we not at least be willing to make the sacrifice and extend the very love that we have been given in the family of Christ? To this end we have made it a priority to serve those children who have been left marginalized in countries abroad by partnering with Juna Amagara in Uganda to sponsor over 100 children who have an opportunity to live a whole life through our efforts. When it comes to long-term adoption we have inaugurated a ministry called "Anchored" to empower and equip VBC families considering adoption. Safe families is a ministry that helps foster children who need transitional care as orphans. This ministry allows us to be a blessing to children in some of the most critical and crucial times.

Engage the world with the gospel

Finally, we must remain steadfast and true to the gospel work. While yields at times seem small, we know that God will honor our feeble attempts. This ministry takes place each week at all of our campuses and is designed to develop and deploy believers to be salt and light to a lost world. Throughout all our ministries is a desire to equip believers with the needed knowledge and gifts to share the good news of Jesus with all we meet. We believe that the testimony of changed lives serves as the best avenue to stem the tide of culture by winning people's hearts—not just social or legislative change but real change that comes by the Spirit and Him alone.

While the evil that abounds in our world today is massive, we have great hope in the power of God and His gospel to break down barriers. We know that He alone can change human hearts and move people to stop destroying life and begin upholding and protecting it. To that end we will pray, contribute and serve, knowing that the One we serve is faithful.

Other information that helped to form this distinctive can be found at the following sites:

<http://churchrepent.com/> <http://polemicsreport.com/2016/08/18/an-open-letter-to-aha/>

<http://teampyro.blogspot.com/2013/07/running-around-without-church.html>

<http://www.jillstaneck.com/2015/03/ahas-dangerous-turn-cyberbullying/>

<http://www.vineyardcolumbus.org/our-response-to-the-weekend-demonstrators/>