



## Reincarnation & Abortion: A New Take on an Old Debate

Not long ago, I overheard my college-age daughter complaining that her first speech was due the next week, but she still couldn't think of a topic. Speech101 is required of all students at her university, just as it is almost everywhere else in the US. Public speaking is an equalizer—when 3 minutes of undivided attention focused on one individual can leave aspiring engineers, teachers, mathematicians, historians and police officers sweating bullets. Choosing a speech topic can be pretty tough—do you go for something safe and reliable, or get on the Internet and search for new ideas?

In America, an entire generation of future leaders has grown up listening to the polarized political and religious arguments that surround one of the most emotionally charged issues in our society: abortion. With over three decades worth of media coverage, picket lines and impassioned pleas from pulpits and activists behind us, could there possibly be a perspective that hasn't been thoroughly considered? Yes—that of the soul.

In a typical college speech or debate class, a number of students focus on the issue of abortion. With the initial battles over the legalization of abortion fought by their parents' generation, many 18-25 year olds across the nation are now demonstrating their own thought leadership by posing new questions on the topic. Among them:

- .....• What if every new life has a particular mission to accomplish here on earth?
- .....• How is America as a country impacted by the loss of an individual's particular talents?
- .....• How is our future altered when key souls are denied entrance?
- .....• How might reincarnation impact the argument on abortion?

Have you ever thought about reincarnation? It's not unlike the perennial Jimmy Stewart film, *It's a Wonderful Life*, that comes around on television every December. His character gets to watch what happened to everyone in the town of Bedford when his unique contributions were pulled out of the equation. And he saw how much of a profound impact even one person has on the world around him.

Reincarnation is a spiritual belief held by over half the world's population including Hindus, Tibetan Buddhists and an increasing number of Christians and Jews. In a recent Gallup Poll, 25% of adults 18 years and older said that they believed in "the rebirth of the soul in a new body after death." In a 1998 Harris Poll, 22% of Christians said that they believed in reincarnation.

Many students on campus aren't just discussing the topic of abortion; they're sharing some of their own experiences and choices. In my daughter's class at a large mid-western university, two students gave pro-life speeches—one more memorable than the other. The first was a man who was passionately pro-life because of his religious beliefs and intellectual understanding of it. The other was a woman in her second year of studies who was also passionately pro-life, based on her first-hand experience. She had taken the previous year off—to have a baby. She was only 18 when she got pregnant during freshman year and it was an unplanned, life-altering event. With the support of her family and friends, she chose to keep the baby and raise him herself. Her conviction in the unquestioned value of that one new life caused her to rearrange her whole life as a result.

The fact that the student in the class chose to have her baby may have been because she tuned into some kind of special tie with her child from a previous lifetime. An awareness that, in spite of the inconvenience to her and the absence of the father, now was the right time for this baby to be born. Who knows? One thing is for sure, there is an emerging trend of young adults who are looking at life before birth in a whole new way. The old black and white polarity on the topic of abortion is being shifted by a new viewpoint that is gaining momentum across campuses worldwide.

This academic session, students will be searching their libraries and the Internet for "new takes on old debates" as they work their way through their philosophy, religion and speech and debate class assignments. If you're looking for an interesting and somewhat controversial research or debate topic, you might consider taking a poll of your classmates to find out who believes they've lived before and what their thoughts are on life before birth. Then give a speech that no one will forget!