

AN EXCERPT FROM:

THE

**ALTERNATIVE**

TO

**ABORTION**

WHY WE MUST BE  
PRO **ABUNDANT** LIFE

**FRAMEWORK TWO**

ENGAGING A PRO-CHOICE PERSON:  
WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO FIND  
COMMON GROUND

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# FRAMEWORK TWO

## ENGAGING A PRO-CHOICE PERSON:

### Why It's Important to Find Common Ground

Engaging a pro-choice person in a discussion about abortion is very difficult. Regardless of whether the person is a family member, friend, or work colleague, these conversations too often end up as shouting matches that reflect more heat than light. Considering this challenge, I am reminded of Jesus's advice to his disciples when he sent them out in pairs to proclaim the gospel to a hostile world. He told them that if folks didn't want to listen to the truth, move on and shake the dust from their feet (Matthew 10:14). In the face of an argument about abortion, it's tempting to implement this approach too quickly. We must learn to endure some discomfort in order to share truth.

To properly discern who to engage in discussion, think about the abortion debate as a normal distribution curve. On the tail ends, you have folks who are solid in their pro-choice and pro-life convictions. However, most people are somewhere on the hump. I refer to these people as potentially "pro-choice lite." Accordingly, I believe they can be reached by the power of the Holy Spirit with a thoughtful and winsome approach.

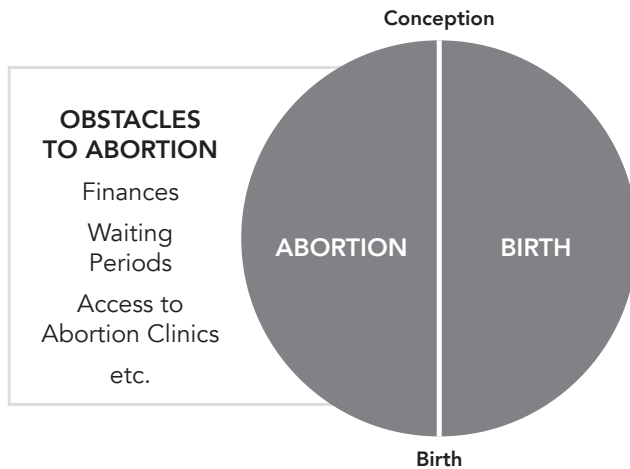
Several years ago, a Care Net ministry partner invited a friend to join a meeting with me because he thought he would be interested in the ministry. After he gave a brief introduction to Care Net's work and me, the guy looked at me and said in a very stern tone, "So you don't think a woman should have control of her own body, do you?" Alas, it was clear this man was not on the same side of the abortion debate as my ministry partner and me.

The usual pro-life response would be that we are not talking about the

woman’s body, but rather another separate and distinct human life in the woman’s body. However, by God’s leading, rather than responding with that answer, I responded with a question seeking to better understand his position before I tried to get him to understand mine. I said, “It sounds like you are pro-choice, right?” He said, “Yes!” Not only was he pro-choice, but his business did work for Planned Parenthood and his daughter had worked there!

I said to him, “OK, so the two choices are birth and abortion, and you don’t care which decision a woman makes, as long as she has the right to make it, right?” He nodded in agreement. Then I asked if there were any obstacles from conception until birth to stop the woman from having an abortion, would he want to remove those obstacles and he said, “Yes!” Then, I tore a piece of paper out of my notebook and drew a circle with a line that divided the circle in half. On the left side of the line, I wrote the word “abortion” and on the right side I wrote the word “birth.” I put the letter C at the top of line for conception and put a B at the bottom of the line for birth. (See Diagram A)

DIAGRAM A



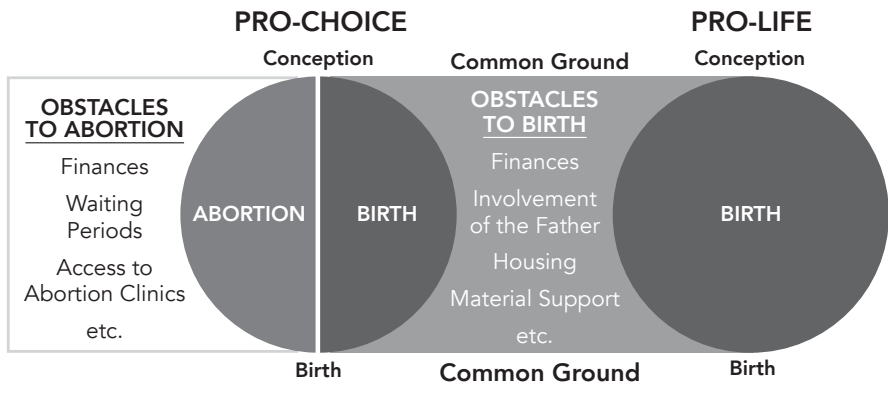
Outside the abortion side of the circle, I wrote obstacles a woman could face to having an abortion, like finances, waiting periods, access to facilities, etc. Then I said, “You want to remove all these obstacles and others,” and he

THE ALTERNATIVE TO ABORTION

said, “Absolutely!” Then, I wrote the word obstacles on the side of the circle next to the word birth and said, “Now, of course, you want to work just as hard to remove the obstacles to birth as well...correct?” (You see, to be *truly* pro-choice, you must be just as committed to removing obstacles to birth as you are to removing obstacles to abortion.) He paused for a moment, and then said, “Well, yes.” So, I began to list obstacles connected to the missing support needed by a woman at risk for abortion.

Next, I drew a second circle and put the word birth in the middle of it and put a C at the top and the B at the bottom like I did with the other circle. I wrote obstacles next to it and listed the same ones that I did next to the birth side of his circle. (See Diagram B) Then, I told him this represented my pro-life position. I too wanted to support women from conception to birth who wanted to have their babies but are facing obstacles. I told him that is what Care Net’s affiliated pregnancy centers do—find ways to remove these obstacles to birth to support a woman’s birth choice.

DIAGRAM B



I paused for a moment, like the detective Columbo used to do, and said, “Looks like we have common ground.” I then drew a circle to connect my circle to the birth part of his pro-choice circle.

When you’re trying to find common ground with someone, it helps to follow a few ground rules. For example, if you’re going out to dinner with a vegan, don’t take them to a steak house. You wouldn’t say, “Here’s a

compromise: you have just a little bit of steak.” No, the common ground between the omnivore and the vegan is at the salad bar. The salad bar is figuratively the birth side of the equation.

Often you will hear pro-choice people challenge pro-life people with the obligation to care for children that result from a life-affirming decision. Their position is that supporting these children is a specific obligation only for pro-lifers. But if they are truly pro-choice, they have just as much of an obligation to support these children, because these little ones are the result of a woman’s choice. Although pro-life people have no obligation to remove the obstacles to birth, pro-choice people have the obligation to remove the obstacles to birth, from conception to birth, and to support the result of a woman’s life-affirming choice—her child.

In any case, he agreed there was common ground between our positions. I spent the remainder of our time together explaining what pregnancy centers do and encouraged him to visit one. Most pro-choice people don’t have outlets to enlighten the birth side of their worldview, and pregnancy centers give them that ability. I am keenly aware that as a pro-choice person begins to “taste and see” women in difficult circumstances empowered to choose life, it will grow the birth side of their circle. During my conversation, what clearly could have devolved into an argument became a conversation where seeds of life were planted in this man’s heart and mind. In fact, the last thing he did as we left the meeting was give me his business card.

The reason I call those who support abortion pro-choice rather than pro-abortion is to help them see they do have a life aspect to their worldview. Granted, there are some like Margaret Sanger who are truly pro-abortion because they believe in controlling woman’s choice based on factors such as her race and economic situation. But most pro-choice people don’t think this way. So, when we call them pro-abortion, it often misrepresents their position, and we miss an important opportunity to engage them.

Transformation in thinking rarely occurs without conversation. Every person who was once pro-choice and became pro-life had a revelation. Something triggered the birth side of their pro-choice circle to grow so much that the abortion side was eclipsed. I know this sounds counterintuitive, but the first step in getting a pro-choice person to become pro-life is to help

them understand the life-affirming obligation embedded in their pro-choice position.

Here's another way to think about this. My wife Yvette is an avid gardener, and often she plants ground cover next to a stone pathway. I've noticed that with some watering, the ground cover grows and covers the stone pathway. But the pathway never overtakes the ground cover, despite it getting water too. Why? Because the ground cover is alive, and the stone pathway is dead. God sets before everyone life and death (Deuteronomy 30:19). The birth side of a pro-choice person's worldview is alive and the abortion aspect is dead. Like my gardener wife Yvette, our calling is to apply the living water of the Holy Spirit to a pro-choice person's worldview so it can grow. Amen!