

AN EXCERPT FROM:

THE

**ALTERNATIVE**

TO

**ABORTION**

WHY WE MUST BE  
PRO **ABUNDANT** LIFE

**FRAMEWORK THREE**

COMPASSION PAIRING™:  
HOW TO ANSWER THOSE WHO BELIEVE  
ABORTION IS A COMPASSIONATE CHOICE

**ROLAND C. WARREN**

# FRAMEWORK THREE

## COMPASSION PAIRING™:

### How to Answer Those Who Believe Abortion is a Compassionate Choice

Remember Mary Elizabeth Williams from chapter three, the woman who wrote the article titled, “So What if Abortion Ends a Life?”<sup>1</sup> If we’re honest, Mary Elizabeth Williams isn’t doing anything out of the ordinary. Instead, she’s determining who deserves the most compassion. This paradigm isn’t new; follow me on an uncomfortable journey to see how this compassion paradigm has frequently been used throughout history.

Let’s take Mary Elizabeth’s statement, “I would put the life of a mother over the life of a fetus every single time,” but let’s replace those words “mother” and “fetus” to realize how we’ve seen this play out before. First, let’s replace those words with “Nazi” and “Jew.” I doubt anyone in 1940s Germany questioned that the Jewish people were fully alive and human. Yet the Nazis believed that Jewish lives were worth sacrificing for the sake of their own world-conquering goals.

How about replacing those words with “slave owner” and “slave.” It then reads, “I would put the life of a slave owner over the life of a slave, every single time, even if I still need to acknowledge my conviction that a slave is indeed a life. It is a life worth sacrificing.” Whoa. I hope you see my point. In China, they used the terms “baby boy” and “baby girl” in their quest for a male-dominated society. It’s not uncommon to see the able-bodied valued more than the disabled or the elderly. The worldview reflected in William’s statement is the same worldview held by everyone who has committed some of the most heinous acts and cruelest violence in the history of mankind.

We can no longer effectively champion the pro-life cause by solely trying to prove that a fetus is a life. There’s a bigger, more powerful worldview at play.

## Compassion Pairings™

The worldview Mary Elizabeth Williams likely doesn't recognize she holds makes a statement about how the powerful will interact with and treat the vulnerable. We dress this stuff up with law and language. We disguise the truth with words like "solution," as in "final solution," and "choice," and mantras like the Clintons touted in the 1994 election about abortion being "safe, legal, and rare." But when you undress the language and show the naked truth, it's the language of death to those who cannot protect themselves.

This is why we object to abortion with such passion. We understand this, don't we? Moreover, we serve the Lamb. What did we learn from his compelling example? We learned exactly how the powerful are supposed to interact with and treat the vulnerable. We know from Philippians 2 that Christ clothed himself in humanity. When he died on the cross with his arms open wide, he demonstrated a powerful point. The powerful must not sacrifice the vulnerable for themselves. They must sacrifice themselves for the vulnerable.

Three words are critical to Care Net's work and ultimately the pro abundant life message. These words are: power, vulnerability, and compassion. First, let's unpack the concept of power. Power is an ability to act in a particular way or the capability to direct yourself or someone else. When people have power, they can direct themselves and influence or control others.

Vulnerability is the flip side of power. It's the lack of an ability to do something or act in a particular way. It's the lack of capacity to influence someone else. Vulnerable people are more susceptible to those who are powerful. There's an interplay between power and vulnerability. Other than God, no one is all powerful. Likewise, no one is all vulnerable. Depending on the situation, you may be more powerful or more vulnerable. There's a fluidity between the two concepts.

Now let's talk about compassion. Compassion is a notion of sympathetic concern or care for someone else. It denotes a focus on others that leads to righteousness and justice. That's a big part of what we do at Care Net—we are purveyors of compassion in our work.

Let's look at the interplay between these three concepts: power,

vulnerability, and compassion. The question is, who do we have the most compassion for, the powerful or the vulnerable? Most of us tend to be more compassionate for the vulnerable. We like to root for the underdog. It's almost like a definition of humanity.

Herein lies a conundrum. Compassion is a commodity that must be apportioned. All day long, we make decisions about how to allocate compassion. You hear about it in decisions about government health care, housing, homelessness, and more. Many conversations revolve around compassion. How do we apportion it? And what's the framework to use when trying to apportion compassion?

I came up with a simple way to better understand this paradigm. I call it Compassion Pairing™ (CP), and it's a way to help us understand the powerful role of compassion in the abortion debate. Imagine you're watching a nature documentary. The scene shows a lovely gazelle grazing in the field and a hungry, ferocious lion. In this pairing, it's easy to see which animal is powerful and which is vulnerable. The lion will easily overpower the vulnerable gazelle. So where does our compassion land? Watch the nature show with a group of people and someone will surely cry out, "Awww! No!" as the gazelle becomes the lion's lunch. Our compassion often follows the vulnerable.

Earlier we touched on another example. The Jews in concentration camps and the Nazis who put them there. Who's more powerful? Who's more vulnerable? It's pretty clear to see. Or what about comparing two different women. One is drinking a bottle of Evian, the other's drinking dirty stream water. Who is the more powerful? Who is the more vulnerable?

We could go through these pairings all day. Compare the bodybuilder to a baby. Picture an elderly woman versus a twenty-something jogging the trail. In so many situations we can imagine, it's easy to distinguish the powerful from the vulnerable. Though we may be impressed by the powerful, our compassion usually follows the vulnerable.

Let's specifically consider the CP framework in the context of abortion. To start, imagine you are in a restaurant with a friend who is eight months pregnant, and she orders alcohol. Do you have a problem? Yes. Why? Because your mind automatically did a quick CP analysis that identified the

more powerful (the woman) and the more vulnerable (her unborn baby). You quickly apportioned more of your compassion toward the vulnerable baby. And here's the thing: a pro-choice person would very likely agree with you and have a problem with your friend drinking alcohol.

So how does the pro-choice person end up with a divergent viewpoint when a woman gets on the surgical table for an abortion or takes the abortion pill? It's good to remember Scripture says our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against Satan's forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:11–20). In short, the evil one skillfully uses several techniques to short-circuit the CP framework that God wired into humanity.

---

COMPASSION PAIRING™  
**How Do You Apportion Compassion?**

Who is the Most Vulnerable?

Who is the More Powerful?



Young Man



Pregnant Woman



Born Baby



Elderly Couple



Unborn Baby

---

First, he tempts us to dehumanize one of the pair. This is exactly what happened with abortion when the baby in the womb was considered just a blob of cells. In fact, this is what happened with the Jews in the Holocaust and Black people during slavery. When the vulnerable are dehumanized, injustice is frequently a result.

Second, Satan tempts us to use a different CP and apply it to another situation. For example, you often hear pro-choice politicians make statements like, “I support a woman’s right to choose, and I don’t think a bunch of men should be controlling her choice.” In this case, the CP is between men and women, and since women are generally viewed as more vulnerable than men,

they get more compassion. They are using the woman/man CP and applying it to the abortion decision.

Finally, Satan tempts us to focus on the situation rather than the people in the situation, generally through story or narrative. For example, some try to focus on the situation and say the baby is more powerful than the woman because the baby can change her life. However, abortion is framed as a woman's empowerment issue (*My Body, My Choice!*). Clearly the one who can end another's life is more powerful than the one who can change another's life. Getting drawn into the emotions of the narrative makes it very easy to lose sight of the facts of the situation. In the case of abortion, a vulnerable human life is being sacrificed for the powerful—a framework that compassionate people consistently reject as unjust.

Given the horror of abortion, it might be easy to think those on the pro-choice side have no compassion. But generally, that is not true. Pro-choice people are mis-apportioning compassion in a way that they don't in other situations. Therefore, a great way to engage them is to model your approach after the apostle Paul in his efforts to reach the Athenians, who worshipped an unknown God (Acts 17:22–34). Paul used the common ground of worship and skillfully introduced the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some mocked him. However, others said they wanted to hear about Jesus again, and some joined him and believed.

In the case of abortion, the common ground with pro-choice people can be compassion. Imagine if you started the conversation with a pro-choice person with, "I know that you are a compassionate person," and then give examples of CP scenarios: Who's the more powerful? Who's the more vulnerable? How do you apportion compassion? This allows you to find some common ground. Then, like Paul, you can show them they are apportioning compassion in abortion differently than they do in every other situation, and then encourage them to join you. A truly compassionate person, regardless of the circumstances, does not sacrifice the vulnerable for the powerful. The CP model is so central to the human condition that God used it to facilitate our redemption through Jesus Christ. Specifically, God used power, vulnerability, and compassion to bring Jesus into the world. Jesus emptied himself of his power and increased his vulnerability by clothing himself the

## WHY WE MUST BE PRO ABUNDANT LIFE

flesh of humanity (Philippians 2). He came into the world as a vulnerable baby, and he left the world with his arms wide open, beaten, bloody, and exposed—vulnerable. In our humanity, we cannot help but be drawn to him and have compassion for him.