

AN EXCERPT FROM:

THE

ALTERNATIVE

TO

ABORTION

WHY WE MUST BE
PRO **ABUNDANT** LIFE

FRAMEWORK FOUR

WHAT TO SAY TO SOMEONE WHO IS
PRO-LIFE EXCEPT IN CASES OF RAPE

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What to Say to Someone Who is Pro-life Except in Cases of Rape

I am not the “rapist’s child.” I was her child. I am God’s child. I’m one of thousands, every year, given the opportunity to live, love, and redeem what the rapist tried to destroy. Our stories are full of hope, full of love, full of purpose.

— Ryan Bomberger

One of the most difficult questions to address in the abortion debate is the situation of rape. Pro-life author and speaker Ryan Bomberger, who was conceived in rape and placed for adoption, notes it’s the scenario that is used often to justify making abortion available in all situations.

Abortion in cases of rape actually account for about 1 percent of abortions.¹ While statistically accurate, that figure is no comfort for the woman who was raped. She is a victim deserving of the utmost compassion. I have a wife, sisters, daughters-in-law, nieces, granddaughters, and countless other women I love dearly, and the thought of them being violated in this way is difficult for me to even contemplate. I understand the desire to “make things right” by having an exception in this case. But the circumstances of a baby’s conception and birth must not determine its value and worth. That’s why we no longer call children who are born out of wedlock illegitimate or bastards. Ryan Bomberger is a committed husband and father of four children who is doing lifesaving work in this world. Is his existence less worthy because of how he was conceived? I think not.

Yet it’s been tricky for the pro-life movement to articulate this viewpoint

in a way that doesn't sound narrow-minded or, candidly, just cruel. Using the Compassion Pairing™ (CP) concept I mentioned in framework three, you can better understand why some pro-life and pro-choice people make this exception, and how to respond persuasively to make the case for the life of the baby in the womb as result of rape.

My thoughts about the CP framework as it relates to instances of rape were challenged by a conversation with a young Christian college student who liked to debate tough issues like abortion. I asked her to tell me her understanding of the pro-choice position, and she responded that “they don't believe it's a life,” along with a few other key arguments. Then I asked about the pro-life arguments.

“We believe that life begins at conception.”

“OK, but what do you say to people who are pro-life, except in cases of rape?”

“I would say to them that life begins at conception.”

“Yes—they agree with you that life begins at conception. Then what would you say?”

“Well...I'd just keep telling them that.”

The more I thought more about her response, the clearer it became that we need better answers. I wondered how someone can be pro-life, except in cases of rape—what is going on in that person's head? I determined that it has to do with power, vulnerability, and compassion. It's about how they configure CP in this situation.

Remember, the CP paradigm is about how we apportion compassion. It's the human condition that naturally occurs, almost without thinking about it. For example, let's once again pair the woman and the baby to assign power, vulnerability, and compassion. Who's the more powerful? Obviously, the woman. Who's the more vulnerable? Again, clearly the baby. I'm not saying the woman has no vulnerability. And I'm also not saying the baby has no power. It's fluid. The baby has some power and the woman has some vulnerability.

In the scenario of rape, however, someone changes the CP. Those who support abortion in cases of rape no longer compare the baby to the woman to make the decision. They compare the woman to her rapist. In this

matchup, they understandably assign more power to the rapist and more vulnerability to the woman. Therefore, they have more compassion for her.

This situation is similar to the one I discussed in framework 3, where pro-choice people use the CP of men/women to support abortion. In this case, people are using the rapist/woman CP to support the abortion of the baby. But in reality, that's not really what's going on in the undeniably difficult case of rape. If conception occurs because of rape, the woman should move into the CP where she is matched to the baby. The rapist then moves into a new CP, where it's the rapist versus the justice system.

Between the rapist and the justice system, who's more powerful? Who's more vulnerable? Where's our compassion? I know it almost breaks your brain. Based on our justice system, our compassion is for the rapist because constitutionally he's "innocent until proven guilty." That's justice. It's a form of compassion. It's our legal system. It's a reflection of compassion.

Compassion pairing™ happens in lots of situations. Let's compare the people with disabilities and those without disabilities. Who's the more powerful? Those without disability. Who's the more vulnerable? Those with disability. How do you apportion compassion? Toward the people living with a disability.

The only way to change this scenario is to introduce a backstory—the key factor that can decrease power and increase vulnerability. Have you ever watched a movie and halfway through you realize you're cheering for the bad guy? You're like, "Oh, he's just killed twelve people. Please let him get away!"

How does that happen? The character is clearly rotten, but then there's a flashback. It shows the character being abused as a small boy. And suddenly, your compassion is with the villain. You understand him better. Your heart goes out to him. Isn't this also what happens before sentencing a criminal? A good lawyer gives the backstory. They play with power, vulnerability, and compassion. It's a truism of life. It happens everywhere.

Now let's look at the pro-choice position and use the same argument. You have the woman; you have the baby. The pro-choice logic is that the baby is more powerful and the woman is more vulnerable, so she should have our compassion.

Let's say I'm a lion on the Serengeti and I'm trying to decide what's for

lunch. I've got an adult gazelle, and I've got a baby gazelle. I do a power, vulnerability, and compassion assessment. Who's the more powerful? The adult gazelle, of course. Who's the more vulnerable? The baby gazelle. So, who do I attack? I go for the easier prey. I choose the baby gazelle. So, in this case, my compassion is apportioned to the adult gazelle. I let the adult go free and have the baby for lunch.

Have you ever watched a Disney movie that tries to make an animal seem human? The storytellers use power, vulnerability, and compassion to humanize the animal characters. This works because in real life, the difference between animals and people is that animals prey on the vulnerable and people protect the vulnerable. What defines humanity is how we interact with power, vulnerability, and compassion. This is why people who are for abortion often don't want to talk about it—because it's a violation of our humanity.

But Babies Do Change Everything

Some on the pro-choice side may say that my assessment here is wrong. They do believe the baby is more powerful than the woman because the baby has the power to change her life—to change everything. There's even a baby products commercial that says it: “Babies change everything.”

To their position, I pose a scenario. Let's say you're in a restaurant with an adjacent bar. You see a woman sitting at the bar who is smoking and drinking. Is there a problem with that? Of course not. No one is going to stop her if she's of legal age. But let me add to our scenario. The woman at the bar is obviously pregnant, due any day now. Does that change anything? Of course it does. We'd all be concerned because she's going to hurt her baby. We would wonder how she didn't know this was wrong. The brave among us would be glad to tap her on the shoulder and let her know the damage she was causing.

When we assess the pregnant woman drinking and smoking, we quickly apportion the power, vulnerability, and compassion paradigm of the situation. We don't even think about it. It just happens.

How do you think someone who's pro-choice would react to the woman in the bar versus a woman who is pregnant as a result of rape? Would they consider how the vulnerable baby in the bar becomes suddenly more powerful in the abortion room?

The variable is the backstory—the situation. But changing the situation doesn't change the reality. The essence of humanity does not change situationally. The fact that I'm a person or not a person doesn't change based on my situation.

A false compassion pairing™ muddied the abortion debate. They pitted women against men and then encouraged evaluation. Who's more powerful? Who's more vulnerable? This became the core of their argument. If you've ever heard a politician say something like, "I think a woman should have the right to choose, and I don't think a bunch of men here in Washington should be making that decision." They're using a CP to defend their opinion. This is the feminist narrative. It's men versus women. But therein lies our opportunity.

When I talk to people who say these things, I'm quick to explain that I know why they believe what they believe. Whenever you see the powerful taking advantage of the vulnerable, your compassion is ignited. Then I explain that this is exactly why I'm pro-life. We have a consistent narrative they don't see.

The False Compassion Pairing™

Our power, vulnerability, and compassion framework disappears once we're no longer comparing two people. If the compassion pairing™ is between a human and a thing, the human will win the compassion every time. Pro-choice advocates maintain the false CP that makes abortion seem like the most compassionate option. They say, "This issue is not about a woman and a baby. It's about a woman and a question mark. A thing."

If we want something to be protected, we humanize it. Think about how animal rights proponents use power, vulnerability, and compassion. Television commercials portray a poor, cold, hungry, animal with its mangy

mess of hair and a sad look on its face, with moody Sarah McLachlan music playing in the background. It's designed to make you feel compassion for that animal and anger toward any human who mistreated it.

Let's consider a CP that compares the rapist to the baby. Where's the power? Where's the vulnerability? Who dies in this worldview? Do you see what happened? If we stand for abortion in cases of rape, then it's the baby who dies in this matchup. This worldview actually holds more compassion for the rapist.

Here's something else that's interesting to think about. Why don't we allow women who have been raped to sit on their attacker's jury? We would say the woman who was raped is too close to the situation. She can't choose what happens to the rapist. That wouldn't be justice.

Now think of that same woman carrying a child because of rape. Which is she closest to, the rapist or the baby? We know that if you're too close to the situation, it's difficult for you to be just—that's why that decision wasn't left to us. That's why that situation was left for God.

What is it about rape that we find so abhorrent? It's because someone used their power against someone more vulnerable. You see, the same reason we have such disdain for rape is the same reason we must reject abortion. Interestingly, when I have heard the compelling stories of compassionate and courageous women who were raped and yet gave birth, they are rejecting abortion for this reason. Specifically, they refuse to let the rapist extend his power through them to the little one in their womb by having an abortion. Indeed, they are motivated by a CP between their baby and the rapist in which they have the most compassion for the most vulnerable. When they bring their baby into the world, they are modeling the same sacrificial love Jesus exhibited on the cross. In the midst of their pain, these courageous women have the moral clarity to see the vulnerable ones who need their sacrifice. And that is why their children call their birth mothers blessed.