

why we can't end abortion without  
**discipleship**

Roland C. Warren

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Founded in 1975, Care Net is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that supports one of the largest networks of pregnancy centers in North America and runs the nation's only real-time call center providing pregnancy decision coaching. Care Net is equipping and mobilizing churches to offer compassion, hope, help, and discipleship to those at risk for abortion.

## VISION

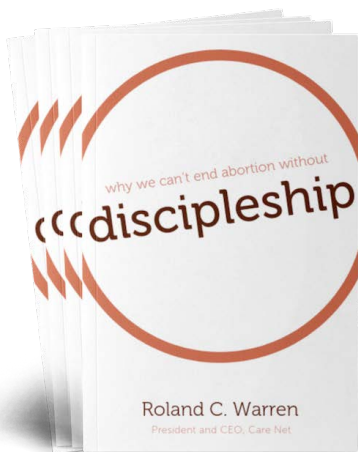
Care Net envisions a culture where women and men faced with pregnancy decisions are transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ and empowered to choose life for their unborn children and **abundant** life for their families.

## MISSION

Acknowledging that every human life begins at conception and is worthy of protection, Care Net offers compassion, hope, and help to anyone considering abortion by presenting them with realistic alternatives and Christ-centered support through our life-affirming network of pregnancy centers, churches, organizations, and individuals.

Learn more about the impact Care Net is having on saving the unborn and promoting **abundant** life for families at:

<https://www.care-net.org>



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## The Problem

Care Net's large national study of women who had abortions found that two out of five women were attending church at least once a month during their first abortion. This means that too many women are walking out of our churches Sunday morning and into abortion clinics on Monday.

Our research also found that most women did not feel their church had any resources to help with their unplanned or unexpectedly complicated pregnancy decisions. Others feared judgment from the congregation should they find out about the pregnancy. Accordingly, there is a critical need for churches to minister to the abortion vulnerable.

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday was created to encourage pastors to talk about abortion and to inspire their congregations to choose life. Yet, the majority of pastors don't incorporate that event into their sermons or teaching. Indeed, most of the women we surveyed didn't believe that their pastor was talking about this issue at all. Despite pro-life efforts to mobilize the church, abortion remains a taboo subject for too many pastors. Some think it's too "political" and too "controversial." Worse yet, some pastors do talk about abortion, only to do so without an appropriate

emphasis on grace or compassion for those in their pews who are suffering the impact of a past abortion decision or currently facing a difficult unplanned pregnancy.

These grace-less approaches may hit the right political notes, but leave out the compassion and care that is desperately needed. They could even drive some to seek abortion. Moreover, even pastors who talk about abortion with the same “neither do I condemn you but go and sin no more” grace that Jesus modeled with the woman caught in adultery, are either accused of being too political or being too judgmental. So, they often feel they “can’t win” and are tempted to remain silent.

All of this made me realize that we need a new approach to abortion in the church, one that is grounded in scripture and pastoral ministry so that we can truly engage and mobilize both pastors and congregants as well as begin “overturning *Roe v. Wade*” in their own pews as we seek to do the same in our nation.

## A Story

A couple of years ago, I had the privilege of speaking at a pastor’s breakfast in Texas. The organizer invited me to talk about abortion and how churches could help their congregations choose life. I started my presentation with a question: “How many of you became pastors because you wanted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*?”

No one raised their hand.

So I asked, “How many of you became pastors because you wanted to end abortion in your lifetime?” Still, no hands.

So, I asked one last question.

“How many of you became pastors because you felt called to preach the Gospel and make disciples of Jesus Christ?”

Every pastor’s hand shot up. Discipleship. That is what got these pastors excited. It’s the great mission of every God-honoring pastor and any vibrant church because it was the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament tells us that Christ chose for Himself twelve disciples. He poured His life and teaching into these men and, with them, performed His ministry. Though He did not need their help, He chose to minister through them. Not a single miracle recorded in New Testament was performed without at least one of His disciples present. Isn’t that incredible? Christ wanted these men to be an integral part of His work.

Discipleship was so important to Christ that His last words before returning to heaven were a call to make disciples.

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. - Matt. 28:19-20*

So they did. Each of His initial disciples, with the exception of Judas, made disciples, who in turn made disciples, who also made disciples, and the Gospel of Christ transformed the world. Therefore, I submit that if we want churches to do the “good work” making abortion unthinkable in their congregations and communities, abortion must be viewed primarily as a discipleship issue.

But, what does discipleship have to do with abortion? Isn't abortion really a material support or a political problem?

## The Role of Material Support

The most common objection to viewing abortion as a discipleship issue is that our focus as pro-life people should be on meeting the immediate needs of women and men facing unplanned pregnancies. Some say if we get distracted by presenting the Gospel or evangelism, we risk alienating those in need of help. We need to give them whatever material support they need to choose life and worry about discipleship another time.

While this approach may appear to be expedient, for us as Christians it is insufficient. In John 10:10, Christ said that He came not just to give us life but **abundant** life. In the Greek, there are two primary words for life. Bios and Zoe. Bios refers to our physical life. This is the root of the word *biology*. When Christ talks about the “...anxieties and riches



and pleasures of this life” (Luke 8:14), He uses the word Bios. Zoe on the other hand refers to a unique spiritual life. In the Greek, it was the divine life uniquely possessed by God.

When Christ says in John 10:10, “I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly,” He is speaking in terms of both Bios and Zoe. In a sense, he is talking about *heartbeats that are heaven bound*. Indeed, Christ came to give this kind of life to all—both inside and outside the womb. That’s why Care Net’s work is not just pro-life. It’s pro **abundant** life. Of note, one can be an atheist and be pro-life but one can’t be an atheist and be pro **abundant** life.

We see this clearly in Christ’s conversation with the Pharisees about taxation. The Pharisees asked if they should pay taxes to Caesar. Rome used the profits of taxation to enact unjust and immoral policies. So, was it lawful as a God-fearing Jew to pay for such policies? Christ knew they wanted to trap Him. If He said no, they’d say He was encouraging insurrection. If He said yes, they’d say he was in support of an immoral government.

Christ did neither. Instead, He asked them for a coin. “Whose face and inscription is this?” he asked. “Caesar’s” they replied. So Christ said, “Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and give to God what is God’s.”

His point could not have been clearer. Money and commerce bore the image of Caesar because they belonged to his realm. Caesar was primarily concerned about the material *and* physical. Men and women however, bear the image of God. The coin may belong to Caesar, but we belong to our creator. Christ's command was to pay taxes and redeem souls. To feed the hungry with their daily bread and to give the hungry the bread of life. Christ called us to bring all of creation back under submission to God, not just smooth over society's rough edges.

Ministering to those considering abortion is no different. If all we do is reach out and meet their physical needs, we won't accomplish what Christ commanded. We will operate only in Caesar's realm instead of God's

Caesar didn't care about eternity in a Christian sense; transformation wasn't on Caesar's radar. It was all transactional to Caesar. Christ *always* cared about transformation. When the woman caught in adultery was thrown at His feet, Christ met her physical need for protection by ensuring she wouldn't be stoned. He then addressed her spiritual need of transformation by forgiving her sin and calling her to "go and sin no more." He didn't leave her where He found her. *Indeed, Christ's call is always to come as you are but not to stay as you came.*

So then, how can we leave those considering abortion where we find them spiritually? The *Guttmacher Institute* says

that more than 50% of abortions are performed on women who had a prior abortion. Planned Parenthood's sign on the door says, "Thank you, come again!" At Care Net pregnancy centers and at Christian churches, our doors can't have this sign. We don't want people to "come again." If they do return, we want them to return not to be served, but to serve others. Indeed, we don't want those at risk for abortion to make the same choices that lead back to the same problems. Nor do we want to see their children in the same circumstance as well.

Pro **abundant** life ministry has to be transformational, not transactional. And, as Christians, we know that lasting transformation comes through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and ongoing discipleship.

This doesn't mean that meeting physical needs is unimportant. If we have the means to help a brother in need and don't, James says that our faith is dead (James 2:14-17). We *can't* minister to the spiritual needs of our neighbors without also ministering to their physical needs, but we can meet their physical needs without *ever touching their spiritual needs*.

That's what the government and most social services organizations do on a daily basis; they meet physical needs without providing spiritual transformation. That's why so many government and social services programs have repeat clients. They often provide a transactional approach to meeting real needs.

If we really want to see an “end to abortion” or to make abortion “unthinkable in this generation” then we have to see clients transformed so that they don’t just choose life (Bios) for their unborn children, but they also choose *abundant life (Zoe) for their families*. This can’t happen if we are only meeting their physical and material needs. And this can’t happen outside the church’s call to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

But what about politics? Isn’t abortion primarily about overturning *Roe v. Wade*? Isn’t that the goal of the pro-life movement?

## The Role of Politics

For decades, pro-life people have marched, rallied, campaigned, and voted for pro-life candidates to state and federal office. These efforts have focused on electing officials who would enact legislation protecting the sanctity of human life. Decades have been spent trying to get the right judges on the Supreme Court so that *Roe* could be overturned. These efforts have been necessary and noble and have produced excellent bills on the state and federal level that have limited the impact of abortion. These pro-life legislative and political endeavors are part of being faithful to God’s call to act on behalf of the oppressed.

The prophet Micah said that God requires us to, “Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8). Part of doing justice is ensuring that governments rule justly.

Governments have the power to tax, imprison, and kill. When a government becomes unjust in its use of those powers, its first victims are the most vulnerable. Nazi Germany went after the infirm, minorities, and the elderly. Why? Because they were the most vulnerable in their society. As pro **abundant** life Christians we cannot ignore the political realm. We are called to actively engage our government and elected officials so that they respect the sanctity of life and enact just laws. However, we can't allow our engagement of the political realm to cause us to think that our primary calling is political. It isn't. Our primary calling is to make disciples for Jesus Christ, which requires us to also care about the spiritual, along with the material and political.

If we become confused about our primary calling, we will never achieve the social transformation we so desperately need. While we've enacted excellent pro-life bills, none of this legislation has removed *Roe* or any of the root causes of abortion. *Roe* did not create abortion; it was already there due to the impact of the sexual revolution's separation of sex and marriage, sex and children, and children from fathers and mothers.

Abortion is an attack on the sanctity of marriage and the family as God designed.

We can't act like eliminating *Roe v. Wade* is enough to end abortion. Experts on both sides of the abortion

debate agree that overturning *Roe* will not eliminate abortion, but rather send the issue back to the states. Pro-life states would likely ban the procedure or severely restrict it, while pro-choice states would likely make it even more available than it is now. Indeed, pro-choice legislators have begun eliminating abortion regulations to ensure abortion remains should *Roe* be overturned. In 2019, New York state passed the *Reproductive Health Act* for this very reason, and other states are considering similar legislation.

If we don't address the reasons people have to desire abortion, then simply making it illegal won't fix the issue. In fact, it will make it worse. Prohibition is an excellent example of this.

When activists, primarily Christians, succeeded in enacting a constitutional ban on the sale and consumption of alcohol, they won a tremendous legal victory. Indeed, many women were motivated to ban alcohol because too many men were abusing it, being abusive, and neglecting their responsibilities as men, husbands, and fathers. However, the banning of alcohol did not address the reasons why people abused alcohol. Moreover, speakeasies, bootleggers, and other enterprising "entrepreneurs" then ensured that Americans could still get their liquor. Of course, it wasn't long before enough opposition to Prohibition mounted, citing the violence resulting from Prohibition, that there was a new constitutional amendment passed, ensuring that no one would ever legally challenge the consumption of alcohol again.

A similar dynamic could certainly occur if, and when, *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. No doubt, pro-choice advocates, like the “Wets” during Prohibition, would be quick to publicize the stories of any women desperate for help in their pregnancies and unable to abort because *Roe v. Wade* is gone. Assuredly, they could use these unfortunate stories in media efforts to campaign for a constitutional amendment to guarantee the right to an abortion.

So, do we stop opposing *Roe v. Wade*? Of course not. We press on in our legal attacks on *Roe*, but we don’t make overturning *Roe* the goal of our movement. It is simply a tactic in our fight to ensure that every person, whether born or unborn, has the opportunity to experience the **abundant** life found in Jesus Christ. This means that, while we campaign against *Roe*, we work to disciple those at risk for abortion or unplanned pregnancy. We ensure that there are trained “first responders” in pregnancy centers and in every church to meet the physical, emotional, *and* spiritual needs of women and men facing pregnancy decisions.

Indeed, life decisions need life support. So, we have to prepare more proactively *now* for the day *after Roe v. Wade* is overturned. If not, we will be caught woefully unprepared for the judicial victory we have spent decades trying to achieve.

## Discipleship is the Key

As I observe the last forty-eight years of the pro-life movement, I see many things worth celebrating. I see lives that have been saved, voters mobilized to support pro-life candidates and legislation, thousands of pregnancy centers working in communities, and churches mobilized to meet the needs of clients. I see the abortion rate declining and popular opinion turning against second and third trimester abortion. These are all great victories.

However, I also know that as many as 2,500 unborn babies will lose their lives in abortions today and another 2,500 tomorrow. By tomorrow night, abortion will have taken more lives than the terrorists on September 11th. These children need more than laws to protect them, they need men and women whose hearts have been transformed by the Gospel, ready to disciple any parent considering abortion.

Yet, for too long, we have too often attacked abortion with the tools of Caesar. So much of our focus has been on reforming the legal climate and meeting material needs that we haven't focused as aggressively on the spiritual rot at the heart of our culture. But Christ shows us a better way.

One day, Christ took His disciples to Mount Hermon. The locals believed that this mountain contained a passage into hell itself. Pagan worshippers would feast, drink, and engage in debauched revelry at its base.



God-fearing Jews would not venture near such rampant immorality, yet this is precisely where Jesus led His disciples. Faced with such evil, Christ promised that He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). He wanted His disciples to know that all the evil of that mountain and all the immoral behavior it came to represent could not resist the power of His church.

Gates are not offensive structures, they are defensive and they don't move. Christ's clear implication was that His disciples were to be engaged in offensive combat, to literally *tear down the gates of hell, brick by brick*.

Abortion is a "Mount Hermon" in our culture, a proverbial gate of hell waiting to be torn down. So, we need to ask ourselves, are we as a pro **abundant** life movement attacking this gate the way God said we should?

Notice, God did not say that the state would defeat hell. It was the church. Pro-life legislators and pro-life pregnancy centers serve alongside the *church* in its call to root out hell in our society. Not the other way around. Yet, for decades our movement has told churches what *they* need to do to work with us on this issue. We've written countless op-eds bemoaning the lack of political involvement by churches, while ignoring the fact that Christ's command was for the *church to lead this fight*. That's why pastors, as the uniquely called and faithful shepherds of the church, are so key and must lead the way.

How does the church defeat the gates of hell? Through fulfilling the great commission. Through making disciples of every nation, tribe, and tongue. Through rendering to Caesar what is his, the material realm, but also rendering to God what is God's, the spiritual. *That's the key to our victory.*

**The question we need to ask ourselves as pro-life people is, will we be Caesar's disciples, or Christ's?**

If we are going to follow Caesar, then our sole and primary focus will be material and our "ministry" transactional. Diapers and baby bottles. Judicial appointees and laws. If we follow Christ, then our primary focus will be spiritual and our ministry transformational as we provide material support and engage politically—not just transformed laws but transformed hearts.

What better way to get churches "on board" with the pro-life movement than to help Christians see that abortion is integrally connected to the very purpose of the church's existence?

What better way to ensure women and men aren't facing multiple difficult pregnancy decisions than by introducing them to the transformational work of the Holy Spirit?

What better way to ensure that our culture not only enacts pro-life laws but abides by them than by making abortion unthinkable to the average person?

So, will you become part of this movement? A pro **abundant** life movement of pastors and elders, congregations and communities making disciples for Jesus Christ and empowering those at risk for abortion to choose life for their unborn children and abundant life for their families?

There are more than 400,000 churches in America and less than 1,000 abortion clinics. If we get this right, Planned Parenthood and abortion providers won't know what hit them.

If you are ready to become a life disciple, please join us by signing up at [www.makinglifedisciples.com](http://www.makinglifedisciples.com) and begin the process of becoming a life disciple today.

## About Making Life Disciples

Care Net's *Making Life Disciples (MLD)* is the only ministry resource that equips churches to create ministries for women and men facing unexpected or unexpectedly complicated pregnancies by offering compassion, hope, and help.

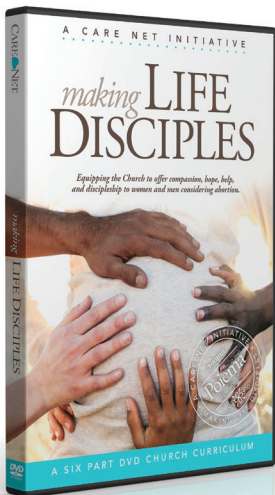
Already, thousands of volunteers have stepped up to bring *Making Life Disciples (MLD)* to their own churches. MLD transforms their churches' response to abortion by:

- Equipping their church to lead with credibility and love - offering compassion, hope, help, and discipleship to women and men facing pregnancy decisions.
- Learning how to have life-saving conversations with someone considering abortion.
- Joining a grassroots network of churches that are making abortion unthinkable in their communities.

You can enroll in Making Life Disciples online today or purchase a print version of the curriculum to use at your church. Learn more here:

Online Course: [www.carenetu.org](http://www.carenetu.org)

Print & DVD: [store.care-net.org](http://store.care-net.org)



There are 2,500 pregnancy centers in North America **doing amazing work to help women and men choose life** for their unborn children and **abundant** life for their families. But **they can't end abortion alone** and **make disciples of Jesus Christ** without local churches. There are 405,000 churches in North America. **Our goal is to get 1,000 churches to implement *Making Life Disciples*™** by the year 2020. Only through the connection to your community can we achieve this goal.

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ROLAND C. WARREN



**Roland C. Warren** is an inspirational leader with a mind for business and a heart for Christ. His background in the corporate world, his extensive experience in nonprofit management, and his deep faith and understanding of scripture enable him to lead Care Net's efforts to transform people with the Gospel, empowering them to choose life for their unborn children. Moreover, he has successfully expanded Care Net's vision, leading the pro-life and pregnancy center movements to help women and men build strong families. This approach is changing the pro-life movement into a pro **abundant** life movement, inspired by Roland's vision and leadership.

Care Net has benefited from the strategic planning skills that Roland cultivated in his career prior to entering the nonprofit world. An alumnus of Princeton University, Roland received an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and went on to hold positions for more than two decades at IBM, PepsiCo, Goldman Sachs, and Princeton University. Roland is also a sought-after speaker at national pro-life conferences and events, pregnancy center events, church and pastoral events, and in the national media.

Roland is married to Dr. Yvette Lopez-Warren. They have two sons — Jamin, a graduate of Harvard University, and Justin, a graduate of the University of North Carolina.



[www.care-net.org](http://www.care-net.org)