

why we must be

pro

abundant
life

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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, runs the nation's only real-time call center providing pregnancy decision coaching, and equips and mobilizes churches to offer compassion, hope, help, and discipleship to those at risk for abortion.

VISION

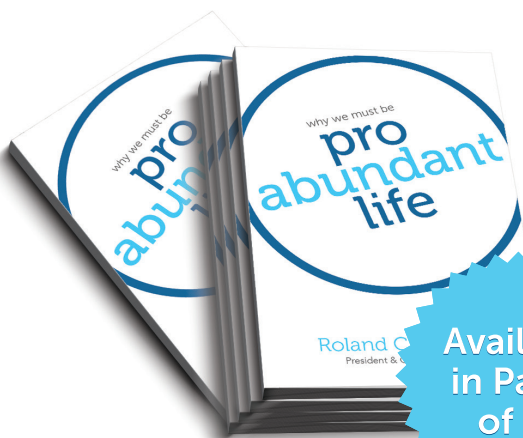
Care Net envisions a culture where women and men faced with pregnancy decisions are transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ and empowered to choose life for their unborn children and abundant life for their families.

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.

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Contents

Why We Must Be Pro Abundant Life	1
Life-focused Messaging	2
Woman-focused Messaging	5
The Pro Abundant Life Message	8
The Role of Healthy Marriages and Responsible Fatherhood	13
The Critical Role of the Gospel	16
Conclusion	18
References	19

why we must be pro abundant life

Abortion. Hardly any topic garners such strident responses in America's political climate. More than forty years after the Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, about one million babies are aborted every year.¹ After four decades of entrenched political discourse, pro-life organizations are rightly debating what messaging best challenges abortion and the abortion culture that has emerged post-*Roe*. The biggest debate seems to center on whether pro-life organizations should focus on abortion's impact on the unborn, its impact on women, or its impact on both.

Life-focused Messaging

Pro-life advocates have always argued that abortion is the destruction of life. The opposition initially argued that abortion simply removes a “clump of cells” from a woman’s uterus, not destroying life, but preventing a pregnancy from becoming a human life. As ultrasound technology improved, pro-life advocates increased their resolve. Ever-clearer images of babies in the womb with tiny hands, feet, and faces, as well as a beating heart seemed to irrefutably represent *life*. Arguments and apologetics were developed that highlighted the logical similarities between the child in the womb and the child in the crib, saliently pointing out that to justify the destruction of one was to justify the destruction of the other.

These arguments were predicated on the hope that people would become pro-life if they realized a human life was at stake. Unfortunately, history is filled with examples of the powerful preying on the weak, fully knowing that their victims were human lives. Few slave owners in the Antebellum South, or Nazi prison guards in World War II, believed that the black slave on the auction block or the Jewish prisoner on his way to the gas chamber was not a person.

They were recognized as persons, but persons worth selling and sacrificing. The slave owners and Nazi soldiers were not dehumanizing their victims; they were sub-humanizing them.

Even with the advent of 4D ultrasound technology, fetal heart monitors, and stories of babies surviving birth at less than 25 weeks, nearly one million abortions will likely happen this year.² Simply highlighting the humanity of the unborn child, no matter how true and important that may be, has not swayed as many as we would like. Pregnancy center workers can attest to stories of women seeing fully formed babies on ultrasound screens, yet choosing abortion anyway.

Moreover, pro-choice advocates are now using the language of personhood to describe the unborn, while denying them their rights as persons. Salon magazine published an article entitled, “So what if abortion ends life?”³ In it, Mary Elizabeth Williams argued that pro-choice activists were “illogically contradictory” for referring to the unborn as clumps of cells one moment and then celebrating a pregnancy or mourning a miscarriage the next. Even Williams agrees that “life is life.”

Rather than arguing that abortion does not sacrifice life, she wrote that activists should argue that the fetus is a “life worth sacrificing.” According to Williams, “A fetus can be a human life without having the same rights as the woman in whose body it resides. She’s the boss. Her life and what is right for her circumstances and her health should automatically trump the rights of the non-autonomous

entity inside of her.” Per Williams, activists should embrace the truth that “all life is not equal.”

Rather than being representative of some radical pro-choice fringe, Williams’ views now describe the rhetoric being used by the nation’s largest abortion advocates.

For example, NARAL’s video, *Comedians in Cars Getting Abortions*⁴, featured a woman saying that she was tired of her body incubating a “person.” Hillary Clinton defended abortion by saying that the “unborn person” does not have any constitutional rights.⁵ And a pro-choice activist who said that becoming a mother made her more pro-choice than ever before wrote an article in *Romper*.⁶

With the pro-choice community adopting the language of personhood in their defense of abortion, some have argued that pro-life advocates must double down on woman-focused messaging to win the fight against abortion. They point to the Center for Medical Progress’ undercover videos and the resulting public backlash against Planned Parenthood as evidence of how successful such messaging can be. Additionally, such messaging allows pro-life people to attack, head on, the claim that abortion empowers women.⁷

Woman-focused Messaging

Planned Parenthood and NARAL have long argued that abortion is a fundamental right of women and have linked it to feminism. Couching abortion in terms like “reproductive justice” and “autonomy,” they argue that a primary reason women have increased in social power is because they have the power to control the lives in their womb.

The problem with this line of reasoning is that research has not found abortion to be a contributing factor to the increased social mobility, economic power, or political power of women.⁸ Additionally, there are multiple studies that have found abortion to be a tool often used to further *reduce* feminine empowerment.

The Guttmacher Institute’s own data found that half of the women who have an abortion say there were having difficulties with the father of the child.⁹ A recent national survey by Care Net found that 6 out of 10 women who have had abortions cite the father of the baby as the person with whom they are most likely to discuss their abortion decision.¹⁰ Moreover, in this survey, the women cite the father of the child as the most influential in their decision to abort.

More than half of the women who are trapped in sex trafficking, researchers found, have experienced abortion, many of them under the coercion of their pimps.¹¹ Due to sex-selected abortion and infanticide, there are over 100 million women missing worldwide.¹² Experts have now referred to this phenomenon as “gendercide.”¹³ Every year, women are threatened or killed by their boyfriends for refusing to abort their children.

A study on the psychological effects of abortion published in the American Medical Association’s *Archives of General Psychiatry* — a study that is often used by the pro-choice community to argue that abortion results in no ill effects — found that a full 20% of women experience regret, depression, and other emotional and psychological reactions after an abortion.¹⁴

With approximately one million abortions a year, that would mean as many as two hundred thousand women suffering psychological harm each year.

Perhaps this is why Frederica Mathewes-Green said, “There is a tremendous sadness and loneliness in the cry ‘A woman’s right to choose.’ No one wants an abortion as she wants an ice-cream cone or a Porsche. She wants an abortion as an animal, caught in a trap, wants to gnaw off its own leg.”¹⁵

With such ample evidence that abortion harms women, embracing a woman-focused pro-life message may seem to be the logical choice. It addresses the increasing evidence that abortion harms women and directly confronts the pro-choice position.

However, after several years of this messaging, little progress has been made to overcome the constant refrain in the entertainment and news media and from pro-choice politicians that abortion is a fundamental right of feminism. When pro-life organizations say that abortion harms women, the media reports that pro-life people are deceiving women. When pro-life people say that some women suffer psychological harm due to their abortions, the media ignores the data and claims the facts are being twisted.

Arguing that to be pro-life is to be pro-women, though true, is an uphill battle. The news media and the entertainment industry have perpetrated the deception that abortion empowers women and that those who oppose abortion oppose women's rights. When coupled with the countless millions of dollars of annual funding that NOW, NARAL, Planned Parenthood, National Abortion Federation, and other abortion lobbyists secure, the complicity of the media and Hollywood ensures that stories about crises such as gendercide barely make a dent in the public conversation.

The Pro Abundant Life Message

When examining the data available on abortions in the United States, it becomes clear that the circumstances that lead to a woman's unplanned pregnancy and subsequent abortion remain with her long after her baby dies.

The pro-choice community largely ignores this reality. Abortion defenders have long treated the issue as one solely of a woman and her immediate choice of terminating her pregnancy. In so doing, they perform a great disservice to the woman, the father of the child, and their unborn baby. Women facing difficult pregnancy decisions are not given the help they need to see beyond their immediate situation into the possible ramifications of their decisions.

Abortion eliminates the baby, but not the poverty, sexual abuse, and relationship difficulties the mother faces that often lead to her being at risk for abortion. Once her abortion is complete, the abortion clinic's services and assistance end. Their focus is on abortion as a financial transaction, not on the life transformation that so many women seeking abortion desperately need.

Pro-life people have the opportunity with their messaging to confront the realities of unplanned pregnancy and abortion head on. We do not agree with the pro-choice movement that abortion is solely a "women's issue," but the pro-life

movement can take things a step further and find a more winsome and holistic argument that will move our cause forward. Rather than focusing only on abortion's destruction of unborn life, pro-life messaging should proclaim the holistic truth that abortion harms women, babies, fathers, families, and communities; and while doing so, we will discover that the breakdown of marriage and the family over the past four decades has directly contributed to the acceptance of our nation's abortion-on-demand culture.

Logically speaking, if pro-life objections to abortion are solely based on its effects on the unborn or on women, then pro-life services won't effectively break the cycle of abortion in families and communities. Indeed, pro-life work cannot just be about saving a baby, as God honoring as this is; it must also be about raising a child and breaking the intergenerational risk for abortion.

So, rather than rejecting a baby-focused message in favor of a woman-focused message, the pro-life movement should consider a more holistic message that has the power to transform lives. This requires embracing and promoting marriage, encouraging responsible fatherhood, and consistently sharing the transformative message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It means providing compassion, hope, and help to those facing pregnancy decisions so that they are empowered to choose life for their unborn children and abundant life for their families.

At Care Net, we use the term “**Pro Abundant Life**” to describe this new approach.

It is an approach with a strong foundation because it is derived from an accurate assessment of what abortion really is. Abortion is not wrong only because it is an attack on the sanctity of human life; it is also wrong because it is an attack on the sanctity of marriage and family as God designed.

The birth of Jesus Christ serves as the inspiration for this approach. When Mary faced an unplanned pregnancy (from her perspective), the angel Gabriel delivered the message of abundant life to her. You see, Mary faced the same dilemma and uncertainty as any other women facing unplanned pregnancy. She had hopes and dreams for her life that did not include a baby at that time and in that way. But, despite the uncertainty about her future, she made a choice based on the certainty of what she did know: there was a life growing inside of her — a life worth protecting.

However, what did God do to make sure that Mary's unplanned pregnancy was not a crisis pregnancy? He sent an angel to Joseph, who faced the same dilemma as any abortion minded man. Initially, Joseph planned a "cultural abortion" to put Mary and the unborn baby away. But, the angel called Joseph to be a husband to Mary and a father to the child growing inside of her. He chose life too. The sanctity of marriage and family as God designed and the sanctity of life are intertwined in the birth story of Jesus Christ as an example for those seeking to protect the unborn. Indeed, this birth story is a "nativity narrative" consistent with God's design — a mother and father united in marriage loving their child and loving God.

The goals of the abortion culture and the sexual revolution that birthed it stand in stark contrast to this divine high idea and the nativity narrative. When the Supreme Court legalized abortion, it delinked motherhood and fatherhood in the womb. Now, from a legal perspective, motherhood begins at conception, but fatherhood begins at birth. This delinking creates perverse incentives for many men to avoid the responsibilities of fatherhood (and marriage) by pressuring women to abort. After all, rights and responsibilities are linked. On the flip side of the equation, it means that committed men who want to take responsibility for their unborn children have little agency and, too often, are discouraged from getting involved in the pregnancy. This is especially problematic since women at risk for abortion often cite the lack of their partner's emotional and financial support as a reason to end the pregnancy.

For the champions of sexual "freedom," this detachment was vitally necessary. The possibility of children threatened sexual freedom and the unencumbered sexual lifestyle sought by the sexual revolution. Contraception, while available, was not always used. So, there was the possibility of pregnancy. Social pressures often meant that pregnancy, especially in the 1970's and before, resulted in marriage. Goodbye sexual freedom. This is why the sexual revolution's leadership called for abortion. Their revolution could have no "victory" without it.

Forty years after *Roe*, our culture still reels from the delinking of marriage, motherhood, fatherhood, sex, and pregnancy. While *Roe's* advocates argued that legalized abortion would reduce the number of out of wedlock births,¹⁶ they have only skyrocketed.¹⁷ And so have the number of single-mother homes, which tend to be the poorest homes in the nation.¹⁸

The pro-choice movement has framed abortion as a “women’s issue” for precisely this reason — it isolates the woman and, oddly, they view this autonomy as empowering. So, by using women-centered messaging, the pro-life movement could end up reinforcing this narrative, despite the reality that a woman at risk for abortion really needs support from the father of her child, her family, the church, and her community. Indeed, a holistic **Pro Abundant Life** message, rather than isolating the woman, “surrounds” her both rhetorically and programmatically with the loving support she needs to consider alternatives to abortion and to avoid becoming a repeat client of either an abortion clinic *or* a life-affirming alternative, such as a pregnancy center.

The Role of Healthy Marriages and Responsible Fatherhood

Central to the **Pro Abundant Life** approach is its emphasis on marriage as both a deterrent to abortion *and* as a source of hope after life is chosen. Marriage deters abortion because children who grow up with married parents are less likely to engage in the risky sexual behaviors that lead to unplanned pregnancies.¹⁹ Marriage's benefits continue into adulthood, because we know that 86% of abortions are among unmarried women.²⁰ Furthermore, the possibility of a high quality and low conflict marriage for the woman and man involved in an unplanned pregnancy can act as a deterrent to her abortion choice. Specifically, research shows that women consider the father of the baby to be the most influential party in her abortion decision.²¹ He is also the party she is most likely to tell about her pregnancy before she gets an abortion.²² Her very act of telling him and involving him in her decision reveals her desire for him to step up to his responsibility to the unborn child she is carrying. After all, if she was not hoping for a life-affirming response from him, why tell him? He could tell others who she does not want to know, or worse, place obstacles in her way.

As important as marriage is, a **Pro Abundant Life** perspective does not mean that marriage is always the right decision for a couple. Some couples are in an unhealthy relationship where marriage would be unwise. It does mean that we should always look for ways to help a couple move toward marriage, if possible, for the reasons discussed previously. Moreover, even if the couple does not marry, we must help them relink marriage, motherhood, fatherhood, sex and pregnancy so that they will adopt this worldview prior to their next sexual opportunity. Further, to break the intergenerational abortion risk, we want parents who choose life to communicate and model God's design for sex and family, especially to children who do not live in a family structure that is modeling this design.

Finally, we know that the best way to ensure that children not only survive, but thrive in life, is when they are raised by their own two married parents. It cannot be the goal of the pro-life movement to be satisfied with creating a generation of children raised by single mothers. We should certainly celebrate the saving of a life and the formation of a family. And we should certainly provide the new single mother and her child the support they need. But if we are to believe our own rhetoric (backed by decades of social science research) that children in unmarried or father-absent homes face significant challenges in life, then we are, ironically, giving ammunition to the faulty pro-choice argument that "the child would have been better off never having been born." When the pro-life movement leaves marriage and fatherhood out of the conversation, we are helping to create situations that we've spent decades trying

to reduce: unwed childbearing, father absence, and the breakdown of the family.

Therefore, we should be embracing the truth that children in father-absent homes are two to four times more likely to live in poverty, use drugs, drop out of school, be abused or neglected, be obese, become incarcerated, and have emotional or behavioral problems. Moreover, they are more likely to be sexually active and, therefore, more at risk for abortion. In other words, the work of the **Pro Abundant Life** movement doesn't end when the baby's life is saved from abortion; it only begins there. Accordingly, the work of providing parenting, relationship and financial support, and marriage education to parents who have just chosen life must be fully integrated into every aspect of the pro-life movement.

The Critical Role of the Gospel

The **Pro Abundant Life** message is centered on the truth that lasting change is not found only in intellectually proving abortion's harm on women and their children — it is found in the person of Jesus Christ. After more than forty years of providing compassion, hope, and help to clients at its network of affiliated pregnancy centers, Care Net has found that intellectual arguments or religious exposure are at times an insufficient barrier to the social and situational pressures to abort. Of note, 4 out of 10 women who have had an abortion were attending church at least once a month at the time of their first abortion and,²⁵ according to the Guttmacher Institute, 54% of women who have abortions identify as Christians.²⁶ These women likely knew that abortion was wrong and violated their Christian values, but their circumstances made them believe that it was their only choice. So, we have a significant and troubling issue of abortion in the Christian church. Moreover, there is a tremendous need for women and men who visit life-affirming pregnancy centers to transition to the church for ongoing support *and* discipleship.

Life decisions *need* the life support that the church is uniquely positioned and called to provide. This is why Care Net created the first curriculum designed to provide

churches with the ministry on-ramp necessary to engage abortion vulnerable women and men with the message of abundant life. *Making Life Disciples™* gives churches the tools they need to raise the pro-life IQ and EQ of their congregations to offer compassion, hope and help to those who need it most. It also equips churches to build life-saving partnerships with their local pregnancy centers, so they can offer ongoing discipleship to clients so that they are less likely to return with another unplanned pregnancy.

Indeed, women inside and outside the church in these situations crave the compassion, hope, and help found in people who live out Christ's call to love their neighbors as themselves. This is why Christ told His disciples that they would be known by their love. You see, offering compassion, hope and help to someone at risk for abortion is a "good work." And all good work that Christians do must lead to making disciples. This is why it is critical that Christians do not frame the abortion issue primarily through the lens of politics or material support. From a **Pro Abundant Life** perspective, the abortion issue is an opportunity to help the mother, father, and the unborn child become disciples of Jesus Christ and to fulfill the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Conclusion

Over 60 million babies have died in the United States since Roe v Wade was decided. Much energy has been spent and much ink spilled trying to craft a message that can stem the tide of abortion and overturn the ruling, yet nearly one million abortions will likely still take place this year.

Abortion is an assault on the sanctity of life *and* the sanctity of marriage and the family as God designed. But, it is also a unique opportunity to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

Therefore, our messaging must reflect an understanding of this. And, our work must offer the compassion, hope and help that mothers, fathers, and unborn children desperately need while calling parents to form stable, loving and God honoring families. To do this, **Pro Abundant Life** messaging and outreach are essential.

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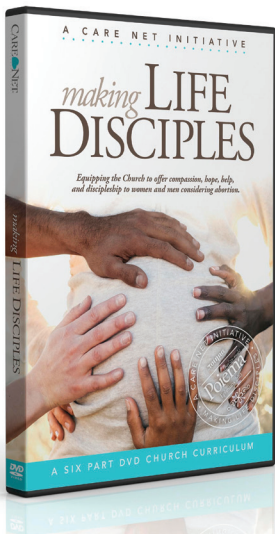
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There are 2,500 pregnancy centers in North America **doing amazing work to help women and men choose life** for their unborn children and abundant life for their families. But **they can't end abortion alone** and **make disciples of Jesus Christ** 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.

Learn more and signup at:
www.makinglifedisciples.com



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 — and one adorable grandson.



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