**Care Net’s Annual Conference: Abundantly More**

**Keynote Transcript: Is the Pro-Choice Position Aligned with the Life and Teachings of Jesus?**

*Roland Warren, President and CEO of Care Net*

Well good morning everyone. Oh my gosh, I got a little self-esteem. I need more than that. Good morning everyone. Well welcome to Mobile. It is a blessing to be with you today and we are so thankful to have you here. Just an amazing group of folks. I think it's our biggest conference ever. It's pretty amazing, about 1600. So we're really excited to have you here and every year this is a special time for us because we have an opportunity to connect with you and to share more about what's going on this year. So this year I wanted to do something a little different and a few years ago I was speaking in a church and it was a life affirming church. And when I finished speaking, I was going back to the foyer to greet folks. And as I was speaking to one lady out of the corner of my eye caught this one guy.

He was kind of standing there looking kind of sheepish and I could tell that he was waiting to speak to me. And once everybody left, he approached me and the first thing that he said was, I really appreciated your remarks, but I wish I would've heard them last Sunday because this week I took my girlfriend to Planned Parenthood to have an abortion. He had regret written all over his face and my heart just really went out to him. And it struck me that his face probably looked like the face of Judas after he had portrayed Jesus and sought to return to 30 pieces of silver. Like this young man, Judas had essentially aborted Jesus because abortion is wrongly and unjustly sacrificing an innocent life for your own wellbeing. Indeed, like Judas, this young man was a Christ follower. Indeed he was studying to be a pastor.

He considered himself deeply pro-life, even going to the March for Life and debating others who did not share his pro-life conviction. He was deeply pro-life, of course, until he wasn't, I won't share all the details of what he told me except this. He strongly encouraged and influenced his Christian girlfriend to have an abortion. He drove her to the abortion clinic, was in the waiting room while they took the life of his child. In any case, God really used this perspective, and this is one of the reasons I want to talk about this because he used this perspective as I was preparing for the conference to really put a burning perspective in my heart and a desire in my heart to really talk about this problem and the sin of Christians having abortions. Interestingly, this perspective was further sort of cemented in my brain and reinforced when Roe was overturned.

Many pro-life, Christians that I spoke to were surprised by the rejection and hostility, the experience that family gatherings even from children that they had spared from abortion in church on social media from Christians who they thought or assumed were pro-life, but in fact were pro-choice. But honestly, if you look at the data, and it's been reported for lots of years, unfortunately, the abortion rate in the church is very close to the abortion rate in the culture. 54% of women who have abortions professed to be either Catholic or Protestant. That's G'S data. And we did a national survey several years ago and we found that four out of 10 women and five out of 10 men were attending church at least monthly at the time of their first abortion in the church on Sunday, like this young man I mentioned and in the abortion clinic on Monday.

So we have a problem. This is where the log in our eye versus the speck in the culture's eye. And you know what Jesus said about that repentance and change must start in the house of the Lord. You see there are two types of pro-choice Christians, those who are pro-choice by chance and circumstance like the young man who approached me and those who are pro-choice by choice and conviction like those who were disappointed and maybe even outraged when Roe was overturned. And so God has put it on my heart that we can't truly expect to change a culture if we and our pro-choice brothers and sisters in the church are not right on the life issue in Word and in ministry, deeded indeed by God's design change, culture change, any change, any restoration must come through the church to the culture, not the other way around. That's why when Jesus came, despite all the clear injustice and sin that was in the culture, he started with the people of the book.

Because if the people of the book aren't righteous and justice, if Jerusalem is not righteous and just Judea, Samir and the rest of the world will never be righteous. And just so in the time that I have with you today, I want to share with you a abundant life apologetic that God's laid on my heart specifically for Christians based on the words of Jesus and the life of Jesus. Now, I'm giving these remarks for a couple of reasons. It's very important, it's a very important topic because it's clear that there is disunity in the church of Jesus Christ regarding the life issue. This just unity stems from a systematic theology framework. Now if you've taken any seminary classes, you'll remember that systematic theology is really designed to answer the question of what does the Bible say about a given topic? It's a theological issue. So we use this perspective when we consider abortion.

This is a theological issue. Theological issues fall into four categories. Absolutes, right? Those are core beliefs of the Christian faith convictions. While not core beliefs, they may have significant impact on the health and effectiveness of the church opinions, less clear issues that are generally not worth dividing over. And then questions, questions, unsettled issues. Now you could see the problem if there's an issue that is clearly an absolute and some in the church recategorize it as an opinion or a question, then there's disunity. In fact, this goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden and the fall of Adam and Eve. There were clear absolutes, do not eat the fruit. But what did Satan do? Well, he told Eve, did God really say that? Or You surely won't die. You caused her to turn something that was an absolute into a question. And then sin ensued.

And we are seeing this happening all the time today and even in the church today on many issues, especially those issues that are cultural issues or social issues and abortion is one of them. There's a clear absolute that God created male and female. There's a clear absolute of what marriage is. There's clear absolutes, clear absolutes. And so we have an issue. We have an issue in the church because when you think about this in the context of the abortion issue, it's an absolute that God is the creator of life. It's an absolute that we're created in the image of God and we're knitted together in our mother's wombs. And it's an absolute that it's a sin to kill an innocent life. But some Christians have turned these absolutes into opinions and questions to justify support for abortion. You see, evil always thrives when God's absolutes become our opinions and our questions.

Moreover, it's not just important that you are pro-life, but it's also important why you are pro-life, why you are pro-life. See, if you're pro-life and it's not anchored firmly to the gospel of Jesus Christ, then there's going to be an issue. Because see, the Bible is the most durable and steadfast way to anchor your pro-life convictions. That's the way you hold that steadfast position. Only then can you withstand the weathers of change that come in the culture, the storms of circumstances and the press of temptation. That said, it's important for each one of us to proactively become ambassadors for the unborn to our pro-choice. Brothers and sisters, the book of James reminds us that if a brother or sister has wandered from the truth, we should lovingly seek to draw them back. So I want to equip you with a perspective to really help you have those types of conversations.

Indeed, you are uniquely positioned to have these conversations because you're in relationship with pro-choice Christians, some of your friends, some of your family members might even be your spouse. So there are four questions that I really want you to consider and I'm going to lay off these four questions in the remainder of my talk. And these are responses to folks who have a pro-choice perspective and profess that in the public square and kind of walk in the Christian faith. The first is how to support for abortion fulfill the great commandment and the great commission. The second is, when did Jesus's human life begin and how should this fact affect the way that Christians view abortions? Third is what does Mary's unplanned pregnancy tell Christians about the abortion decision? And fourth, how should uncertainty about when life begins lead a Christian when they're thinking about abortion? So let me start with the first question.

As Christians, there are two great initiatives that we are called to live out in the public square and to promote in the private realm, and it's the great commandment and the great commission. These are the two essential sort of bookends of the Christian faith that Christ has called us all to. Now the great commandment, we find that in Matthew, we find it in Mark, but we're going to settle in loop where we see the story where Jesus is confronted by a lawyer. And this is in Luke chapter 10 verses 25 through 37, and the lawyer comes to him and says, what must I do to inherit the kingdom of God? Now this is a really important question because any Christian should be asking that question. And of course Jesus doesn't chastise him for saying that, asking that question. He didn't say it's a dumb question.

He thinks it's a good question. So he leans into the question and he ask him, he says, well, what do the scriptures say? And the lawyer responds, well, you should love your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your soul and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus gives him the thumbs up, gives him the thumbs up, and then Jesus kind of pauses there. And it's interesting because see, when Jesus talks about this very same question in other places in scripture, he says that all of scripture hangs on this commandment, this perspective. And this is very interesting because the great commandment goes all the way back to the garden through the story in Genesis. See, God created Adam Eve and when God created Adam's neighbor Eve, he created her from his bone of his bone. So when God said to Adam, love your neighbor as yourself, he looked here at his rib and then he looked at Eve because she essentially was himself.

And if God said to eve love your neighbor as yourself well, she looked at herself and then she'd look at the side of Adam. And so what you see there is this perspective that you see in the garden of loving God and loving neighbor as yourself. And I really think that the reason why God created Eve the way that he did was so there'd be that connection. And the reality is that before Eve was created, Adam didn't have the ability to fulfill the great commandment because he didn't have a neighbor. He didn't have a neighbor. And here's the thing, whenever you see conflict in human relationships, whether it's family or society, it's a reflection of a breakdown or a violation of the great commandment. Love God, love your neighbor and love yourself. These three loves. Now, as I started to reflect on this in the context of the life issue and abortion, God gave me this insight because when you look at this verse and you unpack it, what does the word neighbor mean in the Greek?

It means near one or near fellow. It's loving your near one as yourself. That's the first point. The second thing is if you look at the word love that's used in this verse, it's the highest possible form of love. It's the Greek word agape or agape love. As we say in English, it's sacrificial love. The same word for love that is used in John three 16 where John says, well, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever believe in him will not perish but have eternal life. And also John 1513, greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends. So we're supposed to have this sacrificial love for our neighbor, the near one. Now here's the question. If a woman's pregnant, who is her nearest near one? Now we talk about nearness in two ways.

One is proximity, which is closeness, and the other is relationship. Your next of kid. Well of course it's the baby growing in her womb. Now for the man who got her pregnant, who is his near one, of course in that context, the vulnerable woman certainly is his neighbor, but the baby in the womb is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. That's his nearest near one his next of kin. So you've got to ask yourself a question whether you're a Christian who professes to be pro-choice or a Christian who professes to be pro-life, how is the decision to abort a baby? One of God's image bearers, an act of sacrificial love towards God. In other words, how does aborting a baby demonstrate love for God or even more? Aply put, how does aborting a child align with the great commandment? The commandment that Jesus said is the first and great is of all the commandments of love. God love your neighbor as yourself. And the second question is, how does aborting your near one, the baby in the womb, how is that a sacrificial love for one's near one?

How's that a sacrificial act of love? See, there are these three loves, right? Love God, love neighbor, love self, and they're connected and can't be separated because if you do that, the virtue that is reflected in these three loves actually can become a vice. For example, you say, well, I love God, but I don't love my neighbor. Well, one John 4 21 declares and this commandment we have from him, whoever loves God must love his brother. And you say, okay, well I love my neighbor, but I don't love God. Well, that's humanism, that's humanism. And your love for your neighbor is not anchored on anything immutable. And it's like two boats that are tied together on a river but not tied to the dock. Things are fine until the storms and challenges of life come and your neighbor's boat starts to pull you into rough waters. Well, what do you do? You cut the rope. Our neighbor becomes a life sacrificing, not a life worth sacrificing for. And here's the thing, abortion at its core declares that I don't really love God and I don't love my neighbor growing inside of me, but I do love myself. And so that sacrificial love

Becomes a sacrificing love of self and the vulnerable little one in the womb becomes the child sacrifice. Do you see a life worth sacrificing? Not a life worth sacrificing. The virtue becomes vice. Now returning to Luke. Now this lawyer says, well, okay, so who's my neighbor? Who's my neighbor? And this whole abortion debate is a debate about who's my neighbor? It's kind of big bird meeting Mr. Rogers. And you remember Mr. Rogers, y'all, y'all remember big bird? I got a grand couple grandkids now and I watch a lot of Sesame Street and there's a song, who are the people in my neighborhood? You ever heard the song? Who are the people in your neighborhood? Right in your neighborhood, right? You got that, the people that you meet each day. And then Mr. Rogers, he would sing this song. It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood. It is a beautiful day for a neighbor. And he would get like James Brown sometimes at the end of that because he start to please, he'd be like, please, please, please, please won't you be my neighbor. So this whole question of abortion, it actually is a question about neighbors and who are the people in your neighborhood

And your willingness to be a neighbor? And the only one that wants to end up in a trash can in the neighborhood is this guy who are the people in your neighborhood?

You see, the lawyer realized that Jesus was calling us to a sacrificial love. So I think he was trying to narrow things a bit like Peter, when he asked Jesus, how many times do I need to forgive my brother and sister who sins against me? Because sometimes as Christians, and we've all been there, probably we were faced with a high calling. We are tempted to try to minimize it. Then how little do I need to do to get into heaven? But Jesus didn't answer the question with an answer. He answered the question with a story. He tells the story of the Good Samaritan. And if you're not familiar with that story, it's the story of a vulnerable person at risk who cannot advocate for himself, who had been inspired, excuse me, who'd been injured by robbers and left on the side of the road to die.

There was a priest that came by, walked to the other side, a Levi that came by, walked to the other side ministry folk people of the book, and they moved far from the near one. In other words, they aborted the near one in the time of vulnerability. Of course, they had their reasons, likely spiritual ones, maybe ministry ones, political ones, maybe social justice ones, but their reasons were not aligned with biblical justice, which requires a sacrificial care for the vulnerable. See a pursuit of righteousness, which was clearly the focus of the priest and the Levi must be linked to a pursuit of justice and mercy. If one is to truly live out the agape love that's required of the great commandment. This is really the principle what's happening here. And then there's the good Samaritan and he comes along and he caress for the man and binds him and takes him to an end and all this stuff he does and cares for this vulnerable man, sacrifice of time, talent, and treasure.

And so after Jesus tells that story, he asked the lawyer Now who was a neighbor to the person who fell? And the lawyer says, well, the one who showed him mercy. And then Jesus says, what? Go and do likewise. In other words, be a neighbor to your neighbor now to show how beautiful this is the word mercy. If you look up the Hebrew root of the word mercy and compassion, it's exactly the same root as the word for womb, exactly the same root as the word for womb. So this vulnerable person was put in the womb, if you will, by the good Samaritan. And we are called to model his example. In other words, to have a sacrificial love for our neighbor. Do you see how powerful this is? Because if you think about it, the womb of a mother is a place of mercy. I always think about it that way because every single one of us, I don't care how powerful or strong you are today, share a point of vulnerability with every other living person and every other person that has lived. It was in the womb. It was in the womb. See, that's why Jesus came in the womb. See, so he could share that vulnerability that each and every one of us have in the womb. You are never more vulnerable than in your mother's womb. I don't care where you grew up or how you grew up, it's a shared vulnerability. And the only language babies in the womb have is their heartbeats.

That's the only language they have. And I believe that every heartbeat of a baby is saying, have mercy, have mercy, have mercy, have mercy. And every time a mother hears that heartbeat, senses that heartbeat have mercy, have mercy, have mercy, the womb is a place of mercy. And our mothers like the good Samaritan with agape love, right? With sacrificial love said, I will have mercy. I will have mercy. That you're not a life worth sacrificing, that you're life worth sacrificing for. Amen. And the only reason why any of us are here today is because our mothers did

This is why? You're called blessed. That's why blessed. And whether you're a Christian or not, you're fulfilling the great commandment and you don't even know it have mercy.

So that's why when you look at the great commandment, you see that this is a uniquely Christian, a pro abundant life, apologetic straight from the mouth of Jesus. So for Christians who profess to be pro-choice, you must reconcile this perspective with the great commandment of Jesus. Every issue that we look at, whether it's human trafficking or food insecurity or helping incarcerated folks or care for the poor, whatever the issue is, the great commandment is the standard that we must use to direct our action. Does it align with the great commandment? And so my encouragement here to Christians who profess to be pro-choice, right? So as you talk to Christians who profess to be pro-choice, and even if there's some here in this room, it's to like a camera, to use the great commandment as a lens by which you look at this issue. And I think if you do that, that you'll come to a pro-life perspective, a pro abundant life perspective, which is what we talk about here at Karen. Now, this brings me to the great commission which is found in Matthew chapter 28, verses 19 and 20

We're called to make the Ts and to teach them to obey all that Christ taught us now to points. What is all that Christ taught us? Well, Jesus made it simple. We got the Old Testament, the New Testament. What does he say? All of this distills down into what the great commandment, all of the law depends on that. So everything that Jesus did, the way that he lived, the way that he died, everything that he did was to fulfill the great commission. Second, we're called to make disciples of whom our neighbors, our near ones. And here's the thing, every parent knows that their first discipleship community, their first discipleship calling is to the children that God bless them with. So for the Christian who professes to be pro-choice, how is abort a child, those who are supposed to make disciples of Jesus Christ, an act of making disciples, how is that an act of making disciples? That's like sending missionaries to a foreign land to make disciples and the missionaries just kill everybody, sacrificing them so that the missionaries can have a better life. In fact, isn't that the criticism of some early missionary efforts, the disciple making consist of subjugating and even killing those who they were called to love sacrificially? Do you see? So again, the act of abortion is a violation of the great commandment, yes, but it's also a violation of the great commission, the calling, the calling that every Christian has to make disciples.

So next, well, now if you're a Christian professors to be pro-choice, you might be saying, well, Ron, okay, okay, okay. I agree with you. I get it. We're supposed to have compassion and mercy for those in the womb. I get that. But what if I don't believe it's a baby? What if I don't believe it's a person yet? And so I think with that point, it's really important for us to address this part, this next part, which is really kind of personhood or when does what is in the womb actually become a baby. Now, there are many scriptures that address this, but I think as Christians, the best place for us is always to explore what the Bible says about Jesus himself and his experience being like us, his experience being in the womb just like us. And scripture has some really fascinating things to say about that.

I think the central question for a pro-choice Christian, is when did Jesus's human life begin? When did Jesus' human life begin? And here's the thing. If Jesus is the substitution for us on the cross, if he took all of our sins on the cross, and if he's fully God and fully man, that means that Jesus, right? That his humanity, that Jesus's humanity has to match our humanity or else he's not a substitution for us and we are lost. Now, there are a couple of scripture passages in particular that are worth noting. One Peter chapter two, verse 24 says He himself, that is Jesus bore our sins in his body on the tree. So again, he is exactly like us in order to be the perfect substitution and to bear our sins. And then Colossians chapter two, verse nine says, for in him the whole fullness of the deity dwells and you have filled him who is the head of all rule and authority.

So when you hear scripture again, we as Christians, we're supposed to refer to scripture that is our guide. And so here's Jesus fully man, fully God in a bodily form. That is who he is. So then the question becomes, okay, so when did Jesus's humanity begin? Now we know the story of the birth of Christ and the angel comes to Mary and it is written in Isaiah. Behold, a virgin shall conceive bear a son conception and birth and that it's what we see. Now, it's interesting here because I think one of the key points that I want to make here is that even though the mechanics of Jesus's conception were different, the reality of his conception in birth was the same as ours. And probably the best analogy I can use is artificial insemination. Children who come into the world via artificial insemination. The mechanics are different than the way children normally come into the world, but the practical reality of conception and birth is exactly the same.

So from conception on no difference, which is exactly what we see in the birth of Christ. And so that's why this is so important. If Jesus' life began a conception, what does that mean? Our life has to begin at conception too because otherwise he can't be a perfect substitute for us and take on our sins. But he had to be again, as scripture says, fully God, fully man, fully human. So when Jesus is in the heavenly realm with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he's alive in the sense of a spiritual being in the Godhead. But then there's this addition of humanity, so to speak, it's a mystery when he comes into his humanity in the womb.

So if your argument as a Christian who professes to be pro-choice is that those first however many days or weeks or whatever, you're not exactly a person, that you're not exactly a life. That means that Jesus actually was not a life in his humanity either, which is inconsistent with being God because God in reality can never not be I am that I am means I be that I be. And I heard a pro-choice Christian once talking about this, saying, well, well the baby in the womb, it's not a life, it's a potential life, a potential life. And of course that sounds better than well, it's a life worth sacrificing. But the problem you have with potential life and the potential life claim is that anything that has potential to be something, it can be something else. Say you're a coach, you got a football player, and you look at the guy, you say, well, he has great potential and he turns out to be a bust.

So potential is not always reality. In other words, if it's potentially something, it can be potentially something else. And Jesus could not be potentially life in the womb. Why? Because he can't be anything else than what he truly was, fully God and fully man and with potential. There also brings this other concept of uncertainty. So when you say, Hey, that player has potential, there is uncertainty well being God means there is no uncertainty. God always operates in certainty. Also, when you think about it this way, you can fall into another fallacy, the belief that life is constructed in the womb. See, babies are not constructed in the womb like a Tesla on an assembly line. I mean, when does a Tesla truly become a Tesla? When its wheels are put on, when it gets the name plate? I submit that a Tesla is never intrinsically a Tesla. Why? Because at any point that Tesla can become a toaster, you see babies are not constructed. They develop. That's why there are classes on human development, not human construction. A baby can't be anything else. It's like a Polaroid picture. Once you take it, it can only be what you saw on the lens, even though initially it just looks like this black blob square. But in the fullness of time it develops. There's no uncertainty.

And then the argument, then it is around the story of the birth of Christ and the connection between Mary and Elizabeth. Now in the story in Luke, you hear the angel comes to Mary and tells her that she's going to bear her child. She's going to bear and conceive. But the angel also tells her something very important that Elizabeth, her cousin, is going to have a baby as well. She's already conceived. And it's interesting, there are a couple of things that are significant here. Mary is facing an unplanned pregnancy from a human perspective. And so this is absolutely relevant, absolutely relevant to the abortion issue. She had hopes and dreams for her life and her life with Joseph that did not include a child at this time and in this way. And so this is an unplanned pregnancy from a human perspective. And of course Mary responds to that news says, let it beyond to me, as you have said, that she's going to have this child and this is wonderful, and we love to celebrate that.

And she ponders these things in her heart and in her mind. But the angel also gives her some additional information that's not widely known, which is Elizabeth who's been barren is having this child. And here's the thing, when you read the scriptures, it says that after she gets this news, she hides herself for five months. Did you know that she hi herself for five months? So probably no one knows that Elizabeth is pregnant other than her husband who cannot speak like many men. No, I'm just kidding. I remember when I was told I was 20, I tapped into my moment there, and the angel gives the news and then the angel says that nothing is impossible for God. In the next chapter, you find that Mary Rosen haste to hurry to see Elizabeth. Now, why did she hurry to see Elizabeth? And for those of you doing this work, this is so true that when you're facing an unplanned pregnancy, the first person you tell is the person who you think is going to be the most sympathetic to your situation. And Mary's probably thinking Elizabeth has some crazy stuff happen to her.

And so she goes to see Elizabeth. And it's interesting because scripture says that when Elizabeth sees Mary, right, she's filled with the Holy Spirit and the child in the womb jumps in her. Now here's the question. What was the child in Elizabeth jumping at? What was the child jumping at? Well, it was Jesus conceived in the womb and probably just a few days or a few weeks. So Mary was probably less than a month pregnant at this time. And you've got Elizabeth who's close to six months. And now if you're a pro-choice, Christian with the scripture is telling us here is that late term and early term abortion is both killing a human life. Late term and early term abortion are both killing a human life because John the Baptist jumped in the womb. He lept at something in the womb, not just something, but someone in the womb. So it's pretty clear in scripture that you put a finer point on this by looking at the birth of Christ and what happened during that time.

Finally, so you've heard these three arguments, and let's say that your pro-choice Christian friend says, I'm still uncertain. I'm still having some questions. I'm uncertain about this. I'm uncertain about when life begins. So therefore I support abortion for this reason. And have you heard that before? I don't know when life begins. Therefore I support abortion. Who knows what's happening there? Well, you have to ask a question. Do you have a worldview that says that life is precious? And of course as a Christian, you should. And do you have a worldview that says that innocent vulnerable life is precious? Of course, as a Christian you should say yes. Okay, so here's the question. If you believe that life is precious and that innocent vulnerable life is especially precious, then the uncertainty about when life begins should lead you to a pro-life position, not a pro-choice position. Lemme give you an illustration to prove this point. Let's say that you come over to my house and I'm going to move to someplace else and the movie truck's there and you come into my house and I've got all these boxes and everything and we're ready to move. And I go, oh my gosh, screwed up, screwed up.

There's this precious berger egg that's been in our family for generations and it's in one of these boxes and I forgot to label it. And then I hand you a box. How do you handle that box carefully? How do you handle all of the boxes Carefully. Why? Because if you're uncertain which box it's in, you handle all of the boxes with care. So if you don't know when life begins and you believe that life is precious and you believe that vulnerable life is especially precious, that doesn't lead you to a pro choice perspective, that leads you to a pro-life perspective. Do you see?

So I'm hopeful that these four questions that I walked you through from a biblical perspective will equip you to be an ambassador for life for those Christians who profess to be pro-choice, because I submit to you that is, I'm going to just say this. I would dare say that that's actually our biggest issue. It's our biggest issue. See, as we were pursuing the culture for 40 years, we actually lost large segments of the church. It's like a pastor who's committed to evangelizing some kids at a youth center but is never home and loses his son.

And here's the thing, his son actually runs with the gang at the youth center, but he doesn't know it. Now, if you were counseling that pastor, what would you encourage that pastor to do? Spend some time at home. See, you can't crash the gates of hell that abortion represents. If your army's wearing skinny jeans and sundresses, you've got to have the full armor of God on. And if you wonder why, even legislatively, why these places where we have these red states, if you will, these states are supposed to be pro-life states, and you put those folks in and then a referendum comes up and it loses The difference is Christians, I believe, who profess to be pro-choice. And so we have to have to engage folks in the church on this issue. I think it's a primary responsibility that we have to actually reach out and to connect with our brothers and sisters who have wandered from the truth.

They're sitting in the churches that are supporting you, they're thwarting that support at some level. And so this is really a priority in my view. Now, to recap the perspective again, just to kind of close out those four points. So if someone has this issue, the first place that you start is with the great commandment and does your perspective on the life issue line up with the great commandment and the great commission? Because everything that Christians do should line up to that. And then you put a finer point on that by talking about the birth of Christ and the pregnancy of Mary and the pregnancy of Elizabeth. And you walk them through that. And if there's still uncertainty, then you talk about how uncertainty about when the life begins should lead them not to a pro-choice perspective, to a pro-life perspective. Now, each one of you has a copy of a booklet in your bag that kind of walks through a lot of what I've said. I know I've covered a lot here. It's in there to help you just walk through this. I think it's critically important, the army that we represent, that we are out there engaging folks in the Christian community who profess to be pro-choice. And I want to equip you to be able to do that.

And if you spend any time talking to me or anyone from CareNet, you would know that our perspective is not pro-life, abundant life. And so if you haven't heard me talk about that perspective, there's a code there, a QR code here where you can take a screenshot of that and you can hear me talking about why it's important for us to be abundant life because that's critically connected to how we should be thinking about the life issue and actually pretty connected to what I just shared with you. So as I close, I want to show you how that perspective actually is connected to the way that we look at the life issue. And what I just discussed with you is actually connected to a abundant life perspective. So as you know, the abundant life perspective is based on John 10 10 where Christ said, I came that you might have life and then have that life abundantly why statement.

And in that verse, he's talking about two types of life, Biss, physical life, BIOS, where we get the word biology, and we talk about that in of heartbeat. And then Zoe, which is a unique type of spiritual life that only comes from a relationship with God, which makes us heaven bound. So Jesus is essentially saying, I want you to be heartbeats that are heaven bound. Now, you can be an atheist and be pro-life. You're solving for heartbeats, but you can't be an atheist and be abundant life because you're solving for heartbeats that are heaven bound. And I submit to you as Christians, that's our call now. So that leads us to the question of, well, how do we activate this abundant life perspective? How do we do that? Well, the first thing is God's design for family, which is that first pillar which holds up a abundant life perspective.

And I always talk about the story of Mary and Joseph in the first chapter of the first book of the New Testament and how Mary's facing this unplanned pregnancy from a human perspective. We talked about that hopes and dreams for her life, her life with Joseph that didn't include a child at this time in this way. And she focuses not on the uncertainty of what she doesn't know. She focuses on the certainty of what she does know. There's a life growing inside of her, and it's not a life worth sacrificing, but a life worth sacrificing for. But none of that happens in God's design without reaching out to Joseph because what did God do to make sure that Mary's unplanned pregnancy wasn't a crisis pregnancy? Well, he said an angel to Joseph, and he called Joseph rather to do some very specific things to be a husband to her and a father to the child growing inside of her.

And that's the reason why in this work, it's so critical to reach out to women, not just the women who are facing unplanned pregnancy, but the guy who got her pregnant. That's why that's so critical, because that's what God did, even though Joseph didn't get her pregnant in a sense, right? Theology says that he didn't get her pregnant in that sense, but for God, he had a family design there. Because see, Jesus could have come into the world, be a single mother. I mean, scripture could have been written that way, that would've accomplished God's purpose, but it would've violated his principle, this high idea, this design of how children come into the world. And so Jesus comes into the world consistent with God's design that accomplished his purpose to bring a savior into the world without violating his principle, his design. Do you see? And I believe that's what we should be doing as well.

We should be doing the same thing. It's not just about saving a baby. It's not just about raising a child. It's like building a family consistent with God's design. And that's what you see in the birth of Christ, God's design for family. That's the high idea. Fathers and mothers united in marriage, loving each other, loving their child and loving God. And I always tell folks, don't get it twisted. I'm not saying that every time a woman gets pregnant by a guy, she has to marry that guy. That's not practical or even realistic sometimes. But it's important though because we know that we should be stressing this because when kids are raised by their two biological married parents, due to better across every psychological, social, educational, and economic measurement of child wellbeing, and we need to stress this high idea because if we don't, then that woman who's dealing fatherhood, motherhood, sex and marriage, and God's designed for those things and the guy who's done the same thing will walk out of the pregnancy center and do the same thing.

And then guess what? She'll be back. I call it the 1818 rule. She'll be back in 18 months with a new pregnancy, a new guy, or we'll see her daughter in 18 years or someone, her son got pregnant in 18 years. That's great if you're in these Burger King or a business because that sign says, thank you, come again. Our sign should not say thank you. Come again, not to be served, but to be service to others. See, because Jesus didn't do retail. He said, come as you are essentially, but don't stay as, you can't be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And we're not a retail business. We are a transformational relationship building ministry. And that only happens,

That only happens when you stress those institutions, those covenant building institutions like God's designed for family, God's designed for fatherhood, God's designed for motherhood. That's how you get transformation that breaks the intergenerational cycle of out of wedlock, pregnancy, intergenerational cycle of abortion. That's what you see modeled in the first chapter, the first book of the New Testament. And also, here's the thing, 86% of the women that have abortions are unmarried. So if you're really serious about wanting to end abortion in your community, you're not going to do it without reconnecting. God's design for marriage and family linking fatherhood, motherhood, sex and marriage, fatherhood and motherhood, right? Sex and marriage and God's design for the family, you're just not going to do it. Okay? So the second pillar. The second pillar now is God's call to discipleship. And that's in the last chapter of the first book of the New Testament. And so here's the thing. So many Christians, if you ask them, are they pro-life? And they say yes, and you ask them to prove it, they'll tell you who they voted for.

It's true. Don't get me wrong. Abortion has a political component and a material support need, but it's not primarily a political issue. And it's not primarily a material support issue. It's primarily a discipleship issue because every good work that Christians do should lead to discipleship, water for the thirsty fruit, for the hungry clothes, for the naked. Every good work that we do should lead to discipleship. And what's happened with the life issue is that it's outside of that. So it's outside of the church in that context. We need to bring it back into that perspective that it is a good work that leads to discipleship. See, Jesus had all these people coming to him. This one has too many husbands, this one has too many demons, this one has too much blood, this one has too much money. All these folks came to Jesus with these beos, BIOS needs.

And what did he do? He met them at their point of need and then called them into a Zoe relationship, a discipleship relationship. That's what we're called to do. But the church is the seat of discipleship because we can't make disciples without the church. And that's the reason why we focused on making life disciples. And I really encourage you, if you haven't started to do this, to use this process of making life disciples to get small groups developed in your churches that are supporting you to receive your clients so they can become disciples of Jesus Christ. So that even if they're not living out God's design for family, they'll see people in the church that are living out God's design for family. And that's what happened for me as a little black boy going up in a single mother home. I went to church. So when I got my girlfriend pregnant when I was 20, the thought of being a baby daddy and not a husband and a father didn't even cross my mind because I had seen folk in the church, men loving their wives, and it was aspirational for me.

So that's why it's critical. This is key to doing this. There's only about 3,500 pregnancy centers. There's over 400,000 churches. At least half of those are life affirming. Imagine if just 1% of churches were doing what I'm talking about, there'll be more churches that are life affirming so you can send your clients to, so they don't come back to you except to serve, which is the way Jesus wanted people to come back to him, making life disciples. Now, as I close up here, what do we see here? So we see God's design for family, and then we see God's call to discipleship. Now, what is God's design for family? What's the core purpose of God's design for family? Well, I would submit to you that is to fulfill, is to live out the great commandment. See, you're supposed to be loving God and loving neighbors, which is your family, and that's supposed to be in your family, which is supposed to go into your neighborhood, into the community, into the city, into the state, into you.

Follow me. So actually, the purpose of the family is to live out the great commandment, and that's what you saw in the garden before sin came in. You saw Adam and Eve living out the great commandment, loving each other and themselves and loving God. That's as a parent what you're called to do. You are called to live out the great commandment in the context of parenting, right? So that's it. Now, what were Adam and Eve supposed to do? Well then they were supposed to what? They were supposed to be fruitful and multiply. In other words, have some children supposed to have children, and what were they supposed to do with their children? Make disciples out of them and teach them to obey all that God had taught. So before Satan enters the picture, what you see is the great commandment and the great commission working together.

Do you see how central this work is? And that's why the evil one is against us because the work that you do every single day is the work that goes all the way back to the garden. You're restoring that. That's what you're doing. But you have to see it that way. You have to say, no, no, I'm living out the great commandment by helping to build strong families who love each other and love God, love their neighbors, ask themself. And the first step is bringing that child into the world. But I don't end there because that's just one pillar, because I want that family to be disciples who make disciples who live and love like Jesus and fulfill the great commission. So that's what this work is about, these two pillars together that supports a pro abundant life perspective. And that's why God's designed for family. God's call to discipleship is how you live out the great commandment and how you live out the great Commission. DC. So that's what we're called to do. So brothers and sisters, we have a sacred mission, this lifesaving work to protect the unborn, to build godly families. It's so vitally important. This issue is fundamental to the Christian faith. It's the demonstration of this agape love of Christ and a response to the discipleship call of Jesus Christ. Amen. So let's be added. Blessings to you. Thanks very much.