

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES THAT PASTORS AND CHURCHES FACE IN ADDRESSING ABORTION

The subject of abortion is, by and large, owned by politics, and that just gets messy in church. Or male pastors may not feel they have a right, as a man, to talk about abortion because it's been drilled into our heads for over forty years (in America) that it's a women's issue and you men need to keep your opinions to yourself.

Another reason it is difficult to approach is that pastors know there's a chance that some women in their congregation have lost a child to abortion, and they don't want to make them uncomfortable by bringing it up. I know that all pastors and lay leaders are also constantly inundated with requests and responsibilities, so this can be a huge obstacle. Or, perhaps, the pastor or someone close to him/her lost a child to abortion personally at some point, and the pastor has never personally dealt with it. It may feel hypocritical to talk about abortion as an arduous issue in the church without exposing one's own participation in it or inability to stop it.

Furthermore, children, in general, are not valued as that important in the practice of the church. So, why would we talk about bringing more of them into the world by addressing abortion? As mentioned in Chapter 2, perhaps the most obvious obstacle for pastors talking about abortion in the church is because they honestly don't know how to go about it.

In the past forty-eight years in the United States some improvements have been made here and there with the church addressing abortion. But the greatest strides have been made through para-church organizations that have only the fringe of the church involved. However, few of those will broach the subject from the pulpit. The abortion issue carries seemingly insurmountable obstacles for pastors and churches. I think it might help you specifically, pastor or ministry leader, if we talk about them in more detail so perhaps you can sort out in your mind which ones are the biggest issues for you personally.

OBSTACLES AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

Politics

The subject of abortion is so complex and twisted up in politics that it is extremely difficult to talk about it without someone going away mad. People have very strong politically based opinions about abortion and may get so ticked off that they leave the church if you preach something contrary to their opinion. So you may stay away from the topic because you don't want a church split over national politics. I'm totally with you on that. God is not a member of any political party. Jesus came to change hearts, not laws!

Never before, however, was our shamelessness about abortion so obviously hypocritical as it appeared to me during the 2016 election process in America. We had conservatives railing against abortion politically, promising to overturn the laws that make it legal, with liberals committed to not only uphold the legality of it but allow it without any restriction. Liberal politicians, with the support of liberal organizations, have nullified state laws that limit it or protect the unborn. A recent ruling in California required that pro-life pregnancy centers must help promote abortion. People in the conservative pro-life camp were freaking out about this. The Supreme Court eventually ruled in favor of pregnancy centers.

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But let's think about this. Conservatives in America take up a lot of seats in church. Without having any studies at hand to prove this, my guess is that abortion numbers of conservatives vs. liberals are not much different than those of professing Christians vs. non-Christians. More than half of the abortions in this country are being done on people of our faith, regardless of political persuasion. While we are fighting against abortion on the political front, we are handing the abortion industry our very own babies' lives on a platter. This hypocrisy is difficult to ignore. Put it this way: If we just stopped abortion among Christians the numbers of abortions in America would become less than half of what they currently are!

Conservatives post on social media and hold up signs against abortion in public places. We get mad at those "despicable liberals" who are forcing us to pay for abortion with our taxes while "we" are, in reality, a bigger part of the problem than "they" are! We're so proud of all our efforts to lower abortion rates in the world, while we're not addressing the majority of those that happen within our midst. We should be ashamed of ourselves! I'm afraid we even go beyond what some pagans tolerate. This is a very hard message!

Many pro-life groups are doing some really good things out there in the world. But does the church have any business trying to change our worldly political system while we all but ignore our part in this very issue?

OVERCOMING POLITICS

Many good people are striving hard to change the laws to protect the unborn. I think it's important that we use our votes and voices to uphold the sanctity of all human life. There is never any harm in encouraging people to vote. There are people in the church who are called to speak truth to power, to get involved with changing legislation, or running for office. However, there are ways to approach the subject of abortion in the church at a heart level that removes it from the political realm. In fact, the church needs to purposely and systematically take this subject back from politics because the battle is not going to be won there anyway. Even if laws are changed to be more protective of the unborn, the law is not going to change anyone's heart! That is the job of the church leaders as shepherds, engaging their congregations in extending grace. Starting off by preaching that abortion is morally and biblically wrong, the effect is going to be politically divisive and offensive. There are too many of us who have lost children to it for that approach to be effective in changing hearts. People will be much more likely to listen if the message begins with compassion, even with an apology for the church's silence. In fact, many parishioners are desperate to hear their pastors talk about abortion in such a way. Many are so wounded or confused about where they stand on the issue that they long to hear someone with spiritual authority talk about it in a way that is meaningful, educational, and healing to them. And the rest of the congregation needs a model of how to approach the subject of abortion and those who have been wounded by it. _____

191 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

This isn't just a guess but results of recent studies. George Barna of American Culture & Faith Institute conducted some surveys in 2015 regarding the political issues for the 2016 elections. The study, *What*

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God's People Want to Know, asked both congregants and pastors what they felt were the most pressing issues. Out of twenty-two social and political issues most frequently mentioned (without suggestions), abortion was number one. Ninety-four percent of the over 2,800 congregant respondents said that abortion is extremely or very important for their pastor to preach or teach to the congregation. "A substantial majority of conservative Christians are eager to hear their pastors teach what the Bible has to say about abortion."¹

The study concluded that "To refuse to do so would be to undermine the strength of the body of Christ and would invite the forces of darkness to continue to mislead or distract God's people. Pastors have more than an opportunity to teach on these matters; they have a responsibility and calling to do so."¹⁹³ Other studies done by Barna Group and other organizations "have shown that one of the primary reasons that people are dropping out of churches in record numbers is because they believe it to be irrelevant to life these days. By addressing the topics that people care and wonder about, from a biblical vantage point, [pastors and ministry leaders] will not only make the church more relevant to people's lives but also enable congregants to perceive the Bible in a new light."²

What is important is that politics not be a reason that keeps pastors and ministry leaders from teaching us about abortion. If they don't tell us what the Bible says about such an important issue, where else will we hear correct information? If it is addressed with compassion, there will be an opportunity to take abortion back from politics and make a real difference!

Most pastors are male, and what right does a man have to condemn abortion?

Part of the problem with abortion is that women (and politics) have taken the man's rights away regarding abortion. Or perhaps, men have willingly given them up. I believe that one of the main reasons men have no choice in the matter is because, in many out-of-wedlock pregnancies, the men have not stood up to be men and taken responsibility to parent the baby and support the mom. The first responsibility of young Christian men is respecting God's laws and keeping themselves and their girlfriends pure until marriage.

Every time a male (Christian or not) has sex with a fertile female, there is a risk of pregnancy. For a male, choosing to engage in premarital sex is putting the female at risk. It can happen the first time! While the female is also usually complicit in this behavior, the male does not bear the child. He can just walk away. Not all do, but many have.

So, when women say that it's their right alone to choose because it's their body, and men have no say, other than the fact that the father's baby is in the woman's body there is some unfortunate validity to what they are saying. Collectively, men have given up that right by their behavior as far as many women are concerned.

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_bj6mjUj7k&list=PLaVrc1dDTYYa3OIQ9c1uQSS-y4X7c2lil&index=23

² <http://christiannews.net/2014/08/12/study-reveals-most-american-pastors-silent-on-current-issues-despitebiblical-beliefs/> accessed 4/6/17.

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OVERCOMING THE MALE PASTOR ISSUE

Male pastors and ministry leaders can start taking this subject back by addressing their own gender's combined irresponsibility. It's true that a woman, if she doesn't choose abortion, must carry the baby inside her womb while the man who impregnated her doesn't have to experience any upheaval in his life. He can just walk away. And many times they do. Male pastors could start here with another apology about this, as a man. One doesn't have to be guilty of it to apologize and repent on behalf of all the men in the church and call for the repentance of those who have shirked their responsibilities regarding their children. It's amazing how starting off a conversation with an apology dissolves defenses in a way that nothing else does. It is not preaching as though the ones in spiritual authority are right and others are wrong. It is simply admitting that men's "behavior" has played an important role in the loss of their "voice" in this matter.

I've never heard a pastor address this. This will not only be a helpful validation for women who have suffered because of it, but a strong exhortation to all men to step up in their God-given role as protectors of the "weaker" sex. It's a way to find common ground and soften women's hearts who feel this is a valid question. The exhortation can begin with not putting a girl or woman, whether you love her or not, in a situation that can cause pregnancy outside marriage. Sometimes men need to protect the girl or woman from *themselves*! Moreover, if they don't protect her but put her in this situation, they still have a chance to step up. But it's only a chance because they legally have no right to determine whether their child gets to live.

Teaching from a proactive standpoint, young men can be led to think through what they will do if they impregnate a young woman outside of marriage. Perhaps this exercise alone would be enough to cause them to earnestly consider the ramifications. It's also a place in which men (young and old) could be encouraged to repent of their past sin and commit to a godly approach toward women in the future.

Most pastors don't want to cause discomfort for those who've had abortions

It's true that we become uncomfortable when the subject is brought up. But that's because most of the time when abortion is brought up, it has to do with the babies who have been lost. Everyone feels badly about that; especially us! But talking about babies dying does nothing to bring us hope. I can guarantee you that most of us are uncomfortable to varying degrees without anyone ever mentioning it in church. But there are too many of us who have lost children to abortion for it to do much good just talking about all the dead babies. We just want to crawl under our seats until it's over. In fact, talking about abortion with that singular motive causes more harm than good.

Sometimes churches do things to commemorate the lost lives from abortion, like ring a bell for every million babies that have been killed since it was legalized. While it's important to remember them and recognize how terrible it is, that alone is not an effective approach because it drives the guilty farther into hiding.

We also greatly dislike Mother's Day and Father's Day. We know you're trying to be understanding and compassionate toward those who lost a mother or father; or who lost a child to illness, an accident, or miscarriage; or who could never have a child; or for those who grew up with abusive parents or have rebellious children. We sit there and listen to you go down the list, but no one ever mentions the pain of

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those of us who regret our decision to abort our babies. No one ever recognizes that we, also, are moms and dads who never had a chance to know our children because we were seduced into thinking abortion was our best choice or only choice.

My husband and I have listened multiple years as a church leader goes through a similar list on Mother's Day of reasons why it can be a difficult day. We hold our breath, just waiting to hear them say something about abortion. Come on; I dare you! Just say it! But, of course, they do not. Sigh. I know. It's really uncomfortable to say the "A" word in church under any circumstances. Perhaps deep down there is a belief that our pain doesn't deserve to be acknowledged alongside someone who never committed our sin. A thousand other sins put together are not as grave as ours. So, while we're terrified you might acknowledge ours, we hide deeper because you don't.

OVERCOMING THE DISCOMFORT ISSUE

Again, if this is approached with compassion and humility, including an apology and repentance as a representative of the church, those who have lost children to abortion are going to be much more receptive to the message. They are most likely going to find great relief that they are not alone in their pain any longer, that there is a safe place to finally confess their part in this holocaust because their church leaders are there to repent alongside them. Doing this will begin changing the culture in the congregation to one of safety and healing. The pastor and ministry leaders are the ones who can demonstrate to everyone else how to do this. Staff and lay leaders can be engaged to pray about how to make this shift in the church. Staff or members of the congregation who have lost children to abortion can be invited to give testimony here.

Resources for healing women, men, grandparents, and friends of those who have taken part in abortion can be accumulated and shared with those in need. A pastor's job is not to re-invent the wheel on this, but to invite organizations that provide healing Bible studies to offer them in the church or equip men and women from the congregation to do this. Others can be taught about the need to come around those who are going through healing with regular prayer and encouragement. Volunteers can be assigned to support and encourage those going through the healing process, and a team of volunteers can cover the group in prayer from beginning to end. A time and a place can be provided for people to share their testimonies. Group participants can honor their children in a memorial service and invite those who have covered them in prayer to share in this meaningful time. There are so many ways to address this without fear!

Other Things Are More Important.

Face it! Pastors or lay leaders already have way too much on their plates. Too many other urgent or weighty matters await attention.. It's just another cause that will take up more time and energy. Besides, we've been led to believe it doesn't affect that many people in the church.

OVERCOMING THINGS THAT SEEM MORE IMPORTANT

I can understand the pressures pastors and ministry leaders face. But I pray you will consider that, other than salvation, there is little else more urgent than addressing the abortion issue not merely somewhere in the church, but from the pulpit. George Barna, in another study, asked pastors about the key issues today (remember congregants found abortion number one). Ninety percent of pastors told them, "Yes

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the Bible speaks to every one of these issues.” When asked if they are teaching their people what the Bible says about them, only 10 percent of pastors say they do so.³

In a radio interview broadcaster, Pastor Chuck Baldwin said “Please understand this: America’s malaise is directly due to the deliberate disobedience of America’s pastors—and the willingness of the Christians in the pews to tolerate the disobedience of their pastor. Nothing more! Nothing less!” Baldwin continued. “When Paul wrote his own epitaph, it read, ‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith’ (2 Timothy 4:7). He didn’t say, ‘I had a large congregation, we had big offerings, we had a lot of programs, I had a large staff, and we had large facilities.’”⁴ Stuart Migdon, the Executive Producer of the movie, *Voiceless*, stated, “If God’s people remain ignorant of the value of each individual life, and if we fail to rescue those being led away to slaughter, who but the church is responsible?”⁵ So, in reality, abortion is *the* most important issue for pastors to address today.

The Pastor or Ministry Leader has been Involved in Abortion.

Perhaps a pastor or ministry leader has an abortion in their past and have never been through a healing process. Or perhaps it was their son or daughter who experienced this. Maybe, not knowing the damage that abortion can cause to the living, a pastor recommended an abortion to a parishioner. A pastor involved in an immoral relationship with a woman may pressure her to abort in order to hide his sin. They may be mortified at the idea of sharing this with their congregation. But just like rotten food in anyone’s fridge, this deep, dark secret is not ever going to go away or smell better until they deal head-on with their own participation in light of the gospel. Perhaps their sister or niece, or a friend had an abortion in which the minister played a role. Even silence is a role. Not only do the direct participants need healing for that, but the minister does as well. I understand that it would feel impossible for a pastor to address the subject of abortion from the pulpit if they or a loved one played any role in abortion in the past or they endorsed an abortion for someone in their church. This may be one of the more common reasons it is seldom addressed.

OVERCOMING A LEADER’S PAST INVOLVEMENT WITH ABORTION

If this is you, I hope you know you are not the first, nor will you be the last. Without you intentionally seeking healing, your church will suffer and never move beyond where they are now in the area of abortion. So, please seek healing. Along with your healing, if at all possible, please seek to apologize to the woman or man involved (with your spouse’s full knowledge and presence if they are willing) and take responsibility for the choice you made.

This is a good time to allow God to clean those places in your own heart where you have not previously given Him access. You don’t have to do this alone. In fact, it is never best done alone, because you need the healing that comes from confessing your sins to one another.¹⁹⁸ You can partake in a Bible study and work through this with others who can give you the perspective you’ll never have on your own.

³ Ibid.

⁴ <http://christiannews.net/2014/08/12/study-reveals-most-american-pastors-silent-on-current-issues-despite-biblical-beliefs/> Accessed 4/6/17.

⁵ <https://cradlemyheart.org/2017/04/03/compromised-church-complicit-abortion/> Accessed 4/6/17.

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No doubt, in just about every city in America you will find enough other pastors or ministry leaders who also need healing that you can form your own healing Bible study for pastors facilitated by the abortion healing ministry of your local pregnancy center. Remember that I confessed my abortions even before I went through a healing Bible study! I can't express strongly enough that the confession alone enabled my healing to begin in earnest. I was free to heal without any more fear of someone finding out. The relief of revealing this secret was one of the most significantly freeing aspects of the entire healing process. There is no time like the present to be authentic in this area!

Think about the effect that your testimony will have on your congregation. No, first think about the effect *not* sharing your testimony has. Many others are prevented from their own healing because it's just not safe to talk about their abortion(s) in your church. Many other youth and adults are continuing to choose abortion because you have not given them any compelling reason not to.

Perhaps *not* sharing your story is even more consequential in the lives of others than the abortion has been in your own life personally. On the other hand, if you do confess and repent publicly, think of the transformation, the reconciliation, the redemption you will bring forth by your story! You have an opportunity to lead your congregation in the most empowering exercise of humility and compassion they've ever witnessed or experienced. Please don't allow your shame to keep you (and others) in shame. Call Satan on his lies and take your stand. Furthermore, if you've lost a child to abortion, we *need* you to tell us your story.

We can all learn from it and heal from it, those who have been involved in abortion *and* those who have not. It will give us permission to tell our stories and heal together. We, as your congregation, need you to put this subject back into the perspective in which it belongs. We need you to talk about it from the heart and soul level, how it affects relationships, as well as physical, spiritual, mental, and societal health. How it is sin and we who've lost children to it need not only forgiveness but deep healing in our souls.

The subject of abortion belongs to all of us as a church and as a community. Yes, you're going to open a big can of worms by talking about it. Yes, you're probably going to make mistakes in how you do it sometimes. But when you are real with us, and compassionate, and repentant, we're going to respond much more compassionately than you may believe. Love covers a multitude of sins.⁶ Maybe your congregation currently has a culture of hostility and judgment toward anyone who admits their faults. You can use the subject of abortion as a way to turn this around. You can change the culture of the church to bring Christ's hope through grace to everyone. We desperately need you to take the lead on this!

Children are Not Valued the Same as Adults.

Let's face it. Children are noisy and disruptive, a bother to have in service. Sometimes they are just plain obnoxious. Besides, it is increasingly difficult to find enough volunteers to corral and teach them. They are a drain on resources, both personally and in the church. They have little to offer in the way of service. Oh, they can be cute sometimes, but better seen and not heard. Or not even seen. Some ministers and their wives don't want any more children of their own, so it seems hypocritical to tell

⁶ 1 Peter 4:8.

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others they should have them. If you start talking about abortion, it's going to bring the focus around to the value babies and children have in God's eyes, and we certainly don't want to be accused of encouraging children born out of wedlock. There are more important and productive things on which to focus our efforts.

I don't think most pastors feel all these things, but I believe there are some who do feel some of them, though they would seldom admit it aloud. I do believe, however, that the less we value children in the church, the less likely we will see the need to address abortion in meaningful ways.

OVERCOMING THE LOWERED VALUE OF CHILDREN

What value does God place on children and infants? We cannot ignore the fact that God incarnate made his debut on earth in the form of a blastocyte (fertilized egg), an embryo that would soon attach to the uterus of a young, unmarried teenage girl. God could have sent His Son in a far less scandalous way. Did you ever consider that a significant reason for presenting the Savior to the world under these circumstances might have been because God foreknew that the extent of abortion in the future would wipe out millions of unborn babies in the church alone? These were babies mostly conceived out of wedlock—children whose lives would make a difference in the world if given a chance. They were humans made in the image of God Himself, His artistic creation to do good works. Jesus came to poor, transient, situationally homeless and unmarried parents in a hostile world that even then plotted to kill Him, the one truly innocent babe.

The Christ-child, promised Messiah, dependent on tired, imperfect, sinful parents to change His dirty diapers, feed, and clothe Him. God incarnate, in the flesh, was a fully-human, messy, needy, noisy baby boy. We think it heinous what King Herod did to try to kill Jesus by having all boys age two and under in his vicinity killed.

More than two thousand years later, it appears far less heinous for millions of us in the church around the world to plot the murder of our unborn children and grandchildren conceived in sin. We continue to condemn those conceived in such circumstances, or even much better ones, as unworthy of life because we who say we have accepted this Jesus, this gospel, turn a blind eye to their slaughter and ignore their mother's plight. The least of the least of these – out of sight, out of mind.

Jesus said that whatever we do not do for the least of these we have not done for Him.⁷ He didn't say that the least of these need to get their act together and live like self-respecting good citizens before we care for them. No, we are to care for them as they are, without judgment of their circumstances. Jesus came to Mary in low estate. We need to start seeing these moms and their children—unborn and born—as if they are Jesus Himself. Come to them as Jesus came to the woman caught in adultery, defending and saving her life *before* addressing her sin.

I have never been in a church that values children more than a particular congregation where we were involved. Every Sunday all children, newborn through fifth grade start off in the service with everyone else. Before the sermon, they are called forward, accompanied by parents, to be sung and prayed over

⁷ Matthew 25:45.

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before they go to their classes. Then they all return to sit with their parents to share in Communion and the remaining parts of the service. Or they are welcome to stay in the service the entire time. During the closing song of worship, many children proceed to the front sides of the sanctuary to do what kids do naturally when they hear music—dance! After sitting quietly (mostly) far too long, the release from such confinement for a child is palpable, a time of great joy. The pastor’s preschool girls danced through the entire worship time. I love that they are allowed to do this unhindered! The ratio of children to adults in the congregation is one child to less than one and a half adults. That’s a lot of kids!

While they are in the service, sometimes they cry or make loud, embarrassing sounds. Parents do their best, but that is a lot of babies and children to keep quiet at one time, yet no one seems to mind the occasional disruption. This behavior is frowned upon in most churches I’ve been to throughout my life. Children should be seen and not heard, perfectly behaved at all times, never disrupting the serenity of the adults.

But kids are kids, and at that church they are valued as they are, not as they “should be.” The value that we bestow on them is both a spoken and unspoken message to everyone that children are as integral to our congregation as the adults are. This is a particularly beautiful message to the children themselves and our teens and young adults that babies and children are gifts from God, instilling in them the sanctity of human life from the beginning. The church has a flyer entitled, “Celebrating Children.” It gives ideas for helping your children fully engage in the service, the last point being, “Make sure your little ones know they are welcome and at home in our church! How we make them feel now will directly impact how they respond to church, to God and to one another.” My point exactly!

When people brought their children to be blessed by Jesus, the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”⁸ The disciples, like us, must have been slow learners. It wasn’t long before this that Jesus called a little child to Himself and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”⁹ We need to be thinking about what it means to enter the kingdom of heaven and have a position in it. We must not make light of Jesus’ words here. I think that all the great works we do in the church mean very little to God if we haven’t humbled ourselves *as* children and welcomed the little ones, born and unborn, in His name. Oh that we all would become like them and employ the freedom that we have in Christ to do this dance without inhibition!

[Pastors Don’t Know How to Address this Issue.](#)

While there are numerous para-church ministries addressing abortion, there are few resources for pastors to know how to address it themselves. There are concerted efforts to equip and mobilize congregants, but just about everything available works around pastors and ministry leaders rather than through them. Seminaries are not equipping their students to address this subject, so the only pastors and ministry leaders who are doing so must navigate this path on their own.

⁸ Matthew 19:14

⁹ Matthew 18:2–5.

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Seminary graduates have not been taught the grave importance of opening the conversation about abortion in the church. Yet, seminaries are the one institution with the best opportunities and most appropriate environment to train and equip pastors to address the most difficult issues.

Pregnancy centers often seek opportunities to speak at churches on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday but don't have the time or resources for training pastors and ministry leaders to continue the conversation with their congregation. Even if a pastor or lay leader has a desire to address abortion, all the other obstacles compounded with lack of training makes it feel like an impossible endeavor.

OVERCOMING THE LACK OF ABILITY TO ADDRESS ABORTION

It is time for pastors and ministry leaders to learn how to address abortion. This book will help. There are many resources available online to help with this. One of the most important ways church leaders can become equipped is to meet with their local pregnancy center director to discuss how to integrate into the church all the services the center provides. They can take a tour of the center while they are there. It will make the director's day because he or she longs to see churches in the community become pro-active in addressing all important aspects of ending abortion. Few churches support the work of their local pregnancy centers or know all the services they provide.

The relationship between pregnancy centers and churches should become symbiotic – not just the church supporting the center financially, through prayer and by providing volunteers. The center can support the church with flyers and business cards for the foyer and restrooms with information about help for unexpected pregnancy, abortion trauma healing, and men's services. Speakers can be sent to the church to support their teens in this. They can inform the entire congregation with information about the devastating effects of abortion with testimonies of healing and babies born because they received the support and encouragement the moms needed.

Most pregnancy centers also have an abortion healing program, and women and men who need healing can be invited to a confidential healing group that meets in the church building. Pastors don't have to know or do everything. They just need to endorse the need for healing from abortion and compassionate support for unwed parents within the church. Pastors can call on lay leaders to make use of all the ways local pregnancy centers and other pro-humanity organizations can speak life into their congregations.

There are Various Other Reasons.

You may think of additional reasons we can't say the "A" word in church. Nevertheless, not talking about abortion in meaningful ways in the church is preventing a lot of good from happening. It is also causing a great deal of confusion and pain for those who have lost a child to it or been involved with it. Look at a similar scenario.

Let's say you're just Joe Church Parishioner. A father in your church murdered his two-year-old child. It's all over the news, and everyone is shocked! Wouldn't you hope your pastor would speak with the father who did this (if possible) and bring him to repentance and even justice? Without a doubt, your pastor would reach out to the wife and mother to bring comfort. Wouldn't you expect that the pastor would also address it with the congregation? The entire congregation would need to grieve and heal the loss individually and corporately.

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What if the pastor just ignored it and gave his already prepared sermon with no mention of this tragedy? The agenda for the day was already full. Or it's just too painful or uncomfortable to discuss a member of the church who did such a detestable thing. Where would that leave you, Joe? Would you perhaps feel that God isn't concerned about this catastrophe or that maybe even He is confused about it? (Unfortunately, many people characterize God the way they see the pastor and the church behave.) Would you feel that if you went through a calamity of your own, the church would care? People would whisper to each other about it in horror, and come to their own conclusions, likely not scriptural or loving. But how to deal with it would be up to you and every individual to decide.

A similar scenario is going to a funeral for someone who committed suicide. But the minister never brings it up (even though everyone knows that's how the person died). Perhaps the family asked that the cause of death not be mentioned because of the shame attached to suicide. Everyone leaves there trying to pretend that the fact that it was a suicide wasn't as big a deal as their emotions are telling them it is. No one receives biblical teaching that they desperately need to put this horrible loss into a godly perspective. I attended a funeral like this for a friend who ended her life. All I could do was walk away shaking my head. I had to figure it out on my own. The only time it was discussed was in whispers.

Likewise, there's rarely any guidance from the pulpit of how to grieve over the horrible, excruciating tragedy of abortion. I believe it is mostly because even pastors don't often comprehend the need to grieve over this death as there is with other death. Everyone is left to his or her assumptions, most of which are incorrect. Some pastors talk about the forgiveness aspect, which is extremely important. But God's forgiveness doesn't replace the grieving process. Just because a pastor skirts around the proverbial pink elephant in the room doesn't mean that the pink elephant isn't very real and very dangerous. Others continue to get run down or gored by it because no one warned them about it. And so another life is lost, and the devastation continues.

The taking of life through abortion has happened (and continues to happen) in our churches while the church provides little education or support that will change the tide. In abortion, no one sees when the tiny life of the would-be two-year-old is lost or the lifetime grief that remains for the mom and dad and many others. But the loss is no less than for the two-year-old who is killed. In fact, often the loss is even harder because it's a secret and no one is allowed to grieve, most especially the one who made the choice. Grief avoided is grief that will fester until it is released and expressed in healthy ways.

Those who have lost children to abortion need a gentle hand and compassionate heart to humbly lead them in love to confession and repentance that will begin their healing. Instead, we leave them suffering in silence until the Lord returns, crawling under their seats every time someone mentions abortion because they can't find a leaf big enough to cover their nakedness. And the rest of us need someone to tell us the truth about the modern-day, legal taking of life so that we can provide a place for those who made this choice to grieve and heal. We need to grieve and heal right along with them because we have all lost.

While we listen to wholehearted sermons about salvation and abundant life, and announcements about the upcoming bake sale or other activities, our babies are still dead, and we can't find our way out of our despair. We may not even know where our babies went when we ended their lives. Our well-put-together appearance may fool you into thinking we're doing well. We even fool ourselves sometimes.

**OVERCOMING OBSTACLES
THAT PASTORS AND CHURCHES FACE
IN ADDRESSING ABORTION**

While the subject of abortion is avoided from the pulpit, we're not improving. It affects too many people. It affects all of us. And if it takes someone like me, a fellow Christian and ministry leader who has been through abortion and knows the difference that healing makes, to bring understanding to pastors and other church leaders, I pray you will not push the subject aside any longer but learn all you can. Perhaps you are beginning to imagine what a difference you could make!