



Alternatives to Abortion: Suggestions for Action

By Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission staff - Jan 31, 2006

"Speak up for those who have no voice, for the justice of all who are dispossessed" (Prov. 31:8).

Dale and Jane had no reason to be concerned about abortion, or so they thought.

On a Sunday seemingly like so many others, the situation suddenly changed. The pastor of the Southern Baptist church they were attending announced he would be preaching on the contentious moral issue in the morning service.

Dale and Jane "almost left," she recalls, "because we thought, 'Oh, we don't want to hear this. That's not something we would do. This is a waste of time for us to even be here.'"

They stayed, however, and remain thankful they did.

Jane says they "just never really realized exactly what abortion was until then, and we were horrified when we realized what it was and how ... we had been made to think it's no big deal.

That sermon "just really made an impact ... because we never had thought abortion would affect us. It was just something we knew we'd never consider. We came to realize it affects everybody."

The next step turned out to be a problem.

"At that point I didn't know there was anything else I could do but just tell people, 'No, I don't believe in that,'" Jane says. "I'd really never heard of any pregnancy centers or anything I could do, and I figured when my children were older that I would probably have the time to get involved."

God did not allow them to stay uninvolved, even though it took about four years before they knew what to do. Shortly before she found an outlet for her concern, Jane read an article in a pro-life magazine asking Christians if they were prepared to help women with crisis pregnancies.

"And I thought, 'Yeah, I'm ready now, but I don't know how,'" Jane says.

Soon, a Christian friend invited her to a pro-life rally, where she learned of a Christian pregnancy care center in the city. She quickly became involved as a volunteer at the center.

While Dale was supportive of Jane's newfound involvement, he planned to stay on the sidelines. "I was going to watch the kids when Jane is volunteering—that was my job," he says.

Shortly afterward, Dale went with Jane to another pro-life rally, where he heard the testimony of a woman who had undergone an abortion. "At that point I found out what really is happening in abortion clinics and that unborn children are killed, and people really are devastated by abortion," Dale says.

Dale and Jane's pro-life concern suddenly turned into action. Since then, their desire to help women choose alternatives to abortion has manifested itself in a variety of Christ-honoring ways.

Jane is now volunteer coordinator at a local pregnancy care center, with responsibility for the training and service of 50 volunteer workers. She has served as a "special friend" to a teenager who chose to give birth and prayed to receive Jesus as her Savior and Lord while in the PCC's program. She also writes state and national officials asking them to support pro-life legislation.

Dale has organized two Life Chains, which consist of local residents lining a major thoroughfare for a distance of hopefully several miles while holding signs reading "Abortion kills children." Each was attended by at least 12,000 persons. He also has helped raise financial support for the pregnancy center and a local sidewalk counseling ministry in front of abortion clinics.

Both have participated in gospel outreaches at abortion clinics. These have included sidewalk counseling, picketing, praise singing, and prayer.

The prolonged interval between concern and involvement is not unusual, even for members of outspokenly pro-life Southern Baptist churches, Jane says.

"The people I've talked to have been thinking about it a long time before they've actually come to the training or before they've actually found out about the pregnancy center," Jane says.

Now, ministering in the midst of the tragedy of abortion is a matter of obedience for Dale and Jane.

"I would feel that I was very much out of His will if I weren't doing something," Dale says.

The Challenge

Abortion's legalization in 1973 ignited a holocaust which continues to rage today throughout America.

The practical effect of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions was to legalize abortion on demand throughout all nine months of pregnancy. As a result, about 1.37 million legal abortions are performed each year in the United States, according to a Guttmacher Institute report published by The Planned Parenthood.

Sadly, a large number of Christians have contributed to this figure. An astonishing 37.4 percent of these abortions were conducted on Protestant women and 18 percent describe themselves as born again or evangelical¹. Women sit in worship service after worship service in Southern Baptist churches still suffering the effects of abortions performed 5, 10, 15, 20 or more years ago.

The challenge is mammoth. How does the church transform an insidious cultural mind-set? How do we convince women in crisis that abortion is not the only option? How do we reduce the 3,700 abortions performed each day? How do we help salvage the millions of lives made hollow by past abortions?

Southern Baptists and other Christians can do it one person at a time through the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We can do it by ministering both inside and outside the church. We can do it not only by standing for righteousness and the sanctity of all human life as presented in the Bible, but also by rescuing women from sin, grief, and spiritual death while snatching preborn children from physical death.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed" (Luke 4:18). He is our model and source for ministry.

As followers of Christ, we have been given "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). He is the Reconciler we present to those in need.

God's Word also says we are not to refuse "those being taken off to death, and save those stumbling toward slaughter" (Prov. 24:11). Jesus' love, power, and trustworthiness enable us to join the battle.

It took several years for Jane to find an outlet for her concern about abortion. Is it possible you have had a similar, long-term burden but have not known what to do? Or have you only recently realized God wants you to minister to women with crisis pregnancies?

Here are some suggested ways you can act boldly and lovingly to save unborn children and to share the love of Jesus with mothers in crisis.

Provide Alternatives

In the three decades since the legalization of abortion, Southern Baptists and other Christians increasingly have become involved in making options other than abortion available to women in crisis pregnancies. Here are some of those ways.

Pregnancy care centers: The cornerstone of pro-life outreach in most communities is the pregnancy care center. No organization is more significant in helping Christians minister to pregnant women considering abortion than these centers. Not only are women who thought abortion was their only option provided with alternatives, but also many of them are led to new life in the Lord Jesus.

Pregnancy care centers, staffed by trained Christian volunteers, can help meet material, physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Some PCCs offer all the services a woman considering abortion could need. Here are some of the possible ministries Christians can help provide through this outreach:

- Free pregnancy tests
- Confidential counseling
- Information on fetal development, abortion procedures, and abortion alternatives
- Maternity and baby clothing
- Referrals for low-cost medical care
- Childbirth classes
- Support by a "special friend"
- Schooling and job training

- Career guidance
- Bible studies
- Counseling for families of pregnant women
- Information on infant care
- Adoption services
- Post-abortion support

Many Southern Baptist churches have moved into this area of ministry by establishing or helping support PCCs.

Ultrasound machines: Giving to fund ultrasound machines for PCCs is an excellent means to save babies from abortion. Nearly 90 percent of women contemplating abortion choose to give life rather than abort upon seeing the child on ultrasound². To create awareness of the importance of ultrasound technology and to provide a way for individuals to give to a fund that places sonogram machines in PCCs, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has developed the Psalm 139 Project. The ERLC partners with the Heidi Group, a Christian organization which points pregnant women to Jesus Christ.

Shepherding homes: Christians can provide a loving, caring atmosphere for a girl or woman awaiting the birth of her child. Some girls and women, expelled from their homes by their parents or others, need a place to live. They need material help. They need love and compassion. They need the grace and power of God in their lives. The sacrificial love of a Christian family can result in salvation and spiritual nurture for a woman in desperate need. Many PCCs provide shepherding homes as part of their ministry.

Homes for unwed mothers: Another method of helping women choose life for their babies is to provide a group home for them during pregnancy. A number of Southern Baptist state conventions operate these homes.

Adoption services: While many PCCs provide adoption services, other ministries exist which focus completely on helping to find a home for babies whose mothers choose adoption. A number of state conventions which operate homes for unwed mothers also provide adoption services.

Proclaim Alternatives

Not only must Southern Baptists and other Christians provide the resources necessary for women to choose avenues other than the one leading to abortion, but also they must declare the options in a persuasive manner.

Preaching: Pastors can proclaim the sanctity of human life, the sinfulness of abortion, and the forgiveness, healing, and provision available in Jesus. Their messages should provide the biblical basis for rejecting abortion as an option while creating an atmosphere of love and concern in which a woman in crisis will choose life.

Since 1986, Southern Baptists have set aside the third Sunday each January as Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission offers sermon outlines and other resources for pastors to use in declaring the truth about abortion. It is a message preachers need to present and followers of Christ need to hear.

Teaching: Churches may use their teaching ministries to educate their members about abortion, including what the Bible says about it and what Christians should do in response. Such instruction should include information about options and services available to pregnant women.

LifeWay Christian Resources produces curriculum for youth through adults for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. This biblically based material will help inform and minister to those who hear the message of God's Word that human life is precious.

Sidewalk counseling: Christians who choose this method of proclaiming alternatives truly will be on the front lines in the abortion battle. A sidewalk counselor at a clinic often is the last person standing between a woman and abortion. The approach to her should be loving and without condemnation. On the sidewalk, the opportunity exists to present alternatives to a woman not only when she arrives for an abortion but also when she goes to the abortion clinic for a pregnancy test and counseling. It is important that those witnessing of God's love to these women respect local laws regarding private property. Thousands of women and children have been spared because of the merciful and bold outreach of concerned pro-lifers. Sidewalk counselors need to be able to refer or take women to ministries providing services for them.

Picketing: The right message communicated with the right spirit can make picketing at abortion clinics a valuable way of steering women from a wrong choice toward a life-giving one. Picketing exposes the evil taking place at that location, but it also can help turn women and men away from the decision to abort. Those who believe they are called by God to picket should make sure their message and manner honor Christ.

Distributing literature: Well-done, not offensively graphic, tracts and pamphlets sharing information about abortion, the development of the unborn child, and alternatives to abortion can be made available in a number of places frequented by the public. Christians also can blitz a community with home-to-home literature distribution. A distribution point with great potential, when done wisely and legally, is outside the campus of a middle school or senior high school.

If you intend to remain free from arrest or legal action, stay on a public sidewalk while sidewalk counseling, picketing, or distributing literature at schools.

Present Education

Among the reasons abortion is such a massive problem in the United States is the culture's glorification of sexual immorality and its denial of the responsibility accompanying such behavior. The Bible makes it clear that sexual intercourse, not just pregnancy, outside marriage should be avoided. Through primary venues of the home, church, and school, we should communicate that premarital and extramarital sex is harmful spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Such behavior can lead not only to disease and spiritual ruin but can result in the shedding of innocent blood.

Home: God has given parents the primary role of instilling values, including those concerning sexuality, in their children. Christian parents should model proper attitudes and actions concerning God's gift of sex. Parents not only should transmit with openness and sensitivity the biblical message of sexuality, but they must also prevent the communication of harmful sexual messages to their children through the media.

Church: Local churches should undergird the Christian parents' mission through preaching, teaching, training, and counseling ministries. Parents can be trained to fulfill their God-ordained responsibility to pass on Christian values to their children. Through its ministries, a church can communicate the beauty of God's

gift of sex in the marriage relationship and the dangers of the misuses of sex. Churches need to deliver this biblical message, accurately and compassionately to children, youth, singles, and married adults.

School: Schools increasingly have taken on the task of providing sex education. Especially in public schools, sex education is a volatile issue in many communities. Regrettably, many sex education curricula and programs not only ignore sexual abstinence before marriage as a viable option but also endorse behavior antithetical to the Bible. Christian parents and others can boldly, yet mercifully, influence the selection of sex education material and offer values-based alternatives, such as the widely used curriculum, Sex Respect. Off-campus literature distribution to students also can communicate the truth about sex.

Provide Healing

Another way to prevent abortion is to provide ministry to those who already have suffered through such a choice. Nearly half the abortions in this country are performed on women who have already had at least one abortion. In 2002, about 45 percent of abortions were performed on women who had undergone at least one previous abortion³.

Crisis pregnancy centers and churches throughout the country are providing post-abortion support groups and Bible studies for women in need of healing and restoration after their abortions. Such groups can result in outreach to the unsaved as well as ministry to those suffering in the church body.

By communicating the holiness and grace of God on this issue, pastors and churches can help post-abortion women confront their sin and find forgiveness and healing in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

These suggestions only provide a foundation for what Christians can do to help women choose alternatives to abortion. There are other methods to help women choose to give birth to their children. Certainly, influencing government to adopt public policies which uphold the sanctity of human life — born and unborn — is another way to help women choose alternatives to abortion.

This field in America remains open for ministry. Youth and adults have accepted lies about love, sex, and unborn life. Many of them long for the truth. Some are willing to be shown there is a better way than abortion.

Southern Baptists and other Christians have the opportunity to step into the void and boldly, creatively, and lovingly help women and men “choose life so that you and your descendants may live” (Deut. 30:19).

¹ “Abortion Incidence and Services in the United States, 1995-1996,” Family Planning Perspectives.

² [Women in Need](#), (The Heidi Group) [Accessed December 12, 2005]

³ [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#), (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) [Accessed December 12, 2005]. Data is reported from 39 states and New York City.