



One Thing Every Pastor Can Do to Prevent Abortions in Their Congregation

By Josh Brahm

My view of what church leaders should do about abortion has evolved over 13 years of full-time pro-life work. I used to get very angry when I thought about pastors who are silent on this subject, because I earnestly believed that most of them were either cowards or shamefully apathetic to a serious evil in our country.

After talking to many pastors and parish priests, I've learned that their silence is not due to cowardice or apathy, but due to a very understandable concern of emotionally damaging their congregants whom they know are post-abortive. I'm not saying that the best response to that fear is silence on abortion. I'm merely acknowledging that when a pastor is shepherding hundreds of people, and he knows that some of them are post-abortive, it's at least understandable for him to be very concerned for their well-being if someone says something in church that equates abortion to killing babies.

Fortunately, there is something easy that pastors can do: **make a public commitment on behalf of the whole church that they will treat women who become pregnant with grace and compassion instead of shame and rejection.**

THE PROBLEM

Abortion is not just a secular problem; it happens frighteningly often in our churches. According to a demographically balanced survey that CareNet did of 1,038 post-abortive women in 2015, **36% of women were attending a Christian church once a month or more at the time of their first abortion.**

These statistics force us to ask, "Why are so many Christian women having abortions?" I think it is often because a Christian woman who becomes pregnant out of wedlock faces far greater social consequences than an atheist woman does.

When a Christian woman gets pregnant, she's probably worried about what will happen if her pastor or youth pastor finds out. According to CareNet's survey, while these post-abortive women were considering their abortion decision, the most typical reactions they were expecting from the local church were "judgmental" or "condemning." Only 43% agreed with the statement, "It is safe to talk with a pastor about abortion." Only 42% agreed that pastors teach that God is willing to forgive past abortion decisions. As a result, only 38% agreed that churches are a safe place to talk about pregnancy options.

Many churches would handle this situation better than a woman would assume. Many churches don't shame or kick women out if they get pregnant out of wedlock. I think many churches would rise to the challenge and do a great job of supporting this woman, *but she doesn't know that* if she hasn't seen the church deal with this issue publicly before.

Even though some churches would respond to an unplanned pregnancy well, the women don't know that, so out of fear they abort.

A SOLUTION

While interviewing people for this project, I spoke with Shannon Campbell, a Client Advocate at the Fresno Pregnancy Care Center. She told me a story about a woman she knows who we will call "Anna." Anna spoke to Shannon because she had just taken a positive pregnancy test (which turned out to be a false positive, but she didn't know that at the time), and she wasn't married to her boyfriend. Anna was considering abortion, because she was afraid of what would happen when her parents, friends, and church found out. Shannon told me that she personally knew Anna's pastor, who was very pro-life and would have supported Anna in this difficult time. But Anna didn't know that.

After Shannon told me this story, I said to her, "Imagine an alternative universe where everything else is exactly the same, except Anna's pastor had heard this idea, and had been telling his congregation for the last two years how their church would respond to an unwed, pregnant mother. Would that have made a difference for Anna, or would she still have been too scared to choose life?"

Shannon replied, "Yes, I think that would have given Anna what she needed to choose life." Imagine if thousands of pastors and parish priests across the world pledged to do that very thing. I believe the Christian abortion rate would drop significantly.

So I am asking pastors and parish priests to sign a pledge, which I've embedded in the original article (EqualRightsInstitute.com/Pastor). I will also be embedding a Google Map soon with pins for all of the churches who have taken the pledge. Those pins will be known as safe places for unwed mothers in the church.

If you are excited about this idea, please forward the article to every pastor and parish

priest you know, or, better yet, meet with them personally first. If your pastor is already convinced to take the pledge, you can send him to EqualRightsInstitute.com/Pastor, which has a shorter page that skips the article and gets right to the pledge.

My dream is that eventually the map will have thousands of pins on it. Would you help me make that dream a reality?



COUPON!

For free access to the Equipped for Life Course, email Jen Westmoreland at Jen@EqualRightsInstitute.com



Back Alley Abortion Arguments in Five Minutes

Justice Kennedy has stepped down from the Supreme Court, and that means that the abortion debate is about to change. ERI's philosophy team has been actively identifying those changes and are working on developing material to help our students to be ready. Our first piece of content on that subject is a five minute video from Tim on how to respond to Back Alley Abortion arguments.

Visit EqualRightsInstitute.com/BackAlley to watch the video.

Personal Note to Josh's Friends and Supporters

The biggest change this summer is that my AWESOME wife Hannah has opened an Etsy store called "Mama's Wood Shop" for the amazing home decor things she makes! William drew her logo himself! We spent hours working on the graphic design elements together, but that's nothing compared to how beautiful her work is. I couldn't be more proud of her. You can check out her pieces by going to: Etsy.com/shop/MamasWoodShopNC

Speaking of William, he did his very first 5K with Hannah a few months ago. They did a twilight race through Charlotte. He couldn't wait to start. He did well and was full of energy for about the first half. After mile two he wasn't doing so hot. At the end he didn't want to move which hardly ever happens to William unless he's deathly ill. He did pretty well for never having gone that far before though.

My completely fantastic parents took care of the kids for a whole week to give Hannah and I a much-needed break. As you can see from the picture, our kids absolutely love their

grandparents. (That's Noah reading a book called "Wonder" to my mom.)

Every summer our neighborhood gets access to three weeks of free swimming lessons for kids, and this is the second year in a row that we've done that. At first Eli was terrified to go in the pool but by the end of the third week he was swimming underwater and he never wants to leave the pool! On the day of the picture he said, "My whole body is just all filled up with awesomes! Even my NOSE HOLES! Dis is the best day of my WHOLE LIFE!!!"

Thank you so much for caring for us, and your financial support if you're one of our generous partners.

