

Why Do So Many Churchgoers Have Abortions?

Several months ago, one of my co-workers was speaking with a Christian university campus minister about the issue of abortion, and he dismissed the topic with a wave.

“Abortion isn’t prevalent at our school,” he said. “Contraception is widely available, but our students also take sexual purity to heart.”

I was a bit suspicious of his answer, so I spoke with a recent graduate of the same university about her thoughts.

“I suspect one in three women on campus have had an abortion,” she said matter-of-factly. “It may be higher. Christian kids don’t want to deal with the shame a pregnancy brings. So they abort instead of tell their parents.”

According to a study by the Guttmacher Institute (Planned Parenthood’s affiliate research group), “Almost three-quarters of women obtaining abortions in 2008 reported a religious affiliation. The largest proportion were Protestant (37 percent), and most of the rest said that they were Catholic (28 percent) or that they had no religious affiliation (27 percent). One in five abortion patients identified themselves as born-again, evangelical, charismatic or fundamentalist; 75 percent of these were Protestant.”

Though the study suggests that attending religious services regularly indicates a lower-than-average rate of abortion, the fact remains: Professing Christians abort their children in large numbers. We estimate one in three adults in America today is the parent of an aborted child, and that rate is likely the same both inside and outside the church.

More times than I can count, I’ve heard this remorseful

comment from a post-abortive parent: "I knew it was wrong to abort my child. I was brought up in the church and was pro-life. But I did it anyway."

Why do Christians, many of whom profess to honor the sanctity of life, still abort their children? Why do they promote a pro-life worldview publicly but, when facing an unplanned pregnancy themselves, lose their conviction and take the life of their child?

As many Christian apologists have stated, we act according to what we believe. Christians abort their children because they do not really believe God is the author of life, that every life is sacred and of infinite value, and that there is no such thing as an unplanned pregnancy to the sovereign God.

Instead, the perceived or real shame of an unplanned pregnancy, the financial impact of a child, the relationship strain or just the sheer "inconvenience" of a baby trump the Bible and God. We fear man more than we fear God.

Abortion is, at its core, a spiritual issue. Thus, the reason Christians abort their children is their lack of understanding and acceptance of the gospel of the kingdom.

Modern evangelicalism in America focuses on praying a prayer for salvation, "committing your life to Jesus" or accepting Him as Lord and Savior. We believe that sharing the good news that Jesus died for our sins, rose from the dead and desires a relationship with us completes our obligation to spread the gospel.

And while these facts about Christ are completely true, central to the Christian message and necessary for our salvation, it is not the fullness of the gospel. It is the core but not the entirety.

Colossians 1:18-20 says, "And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from

among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (NIV).

In *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, they remark, "In this passage Jesus Christ is described as the Creator, Sustainer, and Reconciler of everything. Yes, Jesus died for our souls, but He also died to reconcile—that is, to put into right relationship—all that He created. ... The curse is cosmic in scope, bringing decay, brokenness, and death to every speck of the universe. But as King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus is making all things new! This is the good news of the gospel."

The curse of sin breaks four relationships: our relationship with God, with ourselves, with others and with creation. Christ came to reconcile all four relationships. It starts with our relationship with God, but He also redeems the other three. Christ not only preached salvation (our relationship with God), He also healed people physically and emotionally (relationship with self), taught us how to live in marriage and community (relationship with others) and taught us how to manage ourselves and the rest of the created order (relationship with creation).

Abortion is the ultimate tragic and deadly consequence of the fall. It is the sin of unjustly taking the life of an image-bearer of God (relationship with God), is a dire consequence of personal sin and depravity (relationship with self), is caused by and results in broken and strained marriages, friendships and commitments (relationship with others), and destroys another created human being (relationship with creation).

I can think of no worse consequence of the fall than willfully killing a voiceless, defenseless child in the womb.

Yet the gospel, in its fullness, is the remedy to abortion. We must therefore affirm and live out the gospel in its fullness.

Praying the prayer of salvation is a wonderful, monumental moment. It is not generally the cure for abortion.

Discipleship is.

The Great Commission does not command us to go into the world and make converts. It commands us to make disciples. By its very definition, discipleship requires time, energy, commitment, knowledge, patience and skill. It requires love, compassion, kindness and candor.

And we must confront what the gospel truly means—the redemption of every part and parcel of creation. Helping a pregnant mother with drug and alcohol addiction is the gospel. Exhorting the father of an unborn baby to protect and defend his child is the gospel. Providing material needs for a struggling, pregnant couple is the gospel. Coming alongside a couple after birth and helping them with parenting, education and job skills so they can get on their feet is the gospel.

The Great Commission is far more than telling someone the Good News about Jesus. It is engaging them, loving them, walking with them, ministering to them, helping them, encouraging them, teaching them and exhorting them. We need to preach the gospel to ourselves every day. And we need others to lovingly provide teaching and instruction on how that gospel impacts sexuality, marriage, pregnancy and the infinite value of every human being.

Why are Christians aborting their children? They don't fully understand and accept the gospel. And they aren't being disciplined. They know Jesus and accept Him as Savior but do not know or understand His lordship. They do not know the radical, transformative, awe-inspiring impact of being disciplined.

Abortion can and should be eradicated from Christian churches.

It shouldn't be because we pray the prayer of salvation. It should be because we are so completely and utterly committed to loving and caring for others, providing redemption through Christ to all broken areas, that abortion becomes unthinkable.

Brian Fisher *is the author of Abortion: The Ultimate Exploitation of Women and the co-founder and president of Online for Life, a nonprofit that uses new and emerging strategies to save the lives of innocent, unborn babies. He has recently published articles on both and .*

Is 'Preachers of LA' Reality Show a Setback for the Church?

Here's the promo reel for the new show on the Oxygen Network *Preachers of L.A.* I don't have anything to do with it, but I'd be curious about your thoughts.

Is this going to help the cause of engaging the culture? Will this be a move forward or a setback for the church? One big question is: Why did they pick these guys? Let me know what you think.

Quadriplegic Walks Again After Crying, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus'

The old man is certain of two things: He can walk again, and Jesus made it happen.

Known in this ethnic Tibetan community only as "Grandpa," the 71-year-old tells his story with a gleam in his watery brown eyes.

"Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," Grandpa repeats, holding his palms together just under the nose of his weathered face and bowing his head as if in **prayer**. "I prayed to Jesus, and now I can walk."

It began about 10 months ago, when Sonam Lhomi, an ethnic Tibetan, introduced the old man to her friends Eliza Ellis* and Alexis Frei,* student volunteers serving in Nepal.

At the time, the old man was confined to his bed, paralyzed from the neck down as a result of an avalanche in the mountains. For three years, Grandpa could not move his arms or legs. He was completely bedridden, requiring constant care.

Then Sonam, Ellis and Frei paid a visit to the man's modest one-room home he shares with his wife. They came to tell the family stories about **Jesus**. When they realized the man's condition, the three women offered to pray for him.

"I requested them to **pray** for me, and they prayed for me a lot," Grandpa says. "The girls showed me [how] to pray to God, and then I prayed to God."

Slowly, over a period of weeks, Grandpa began to regain his ability to move. First it was his arms.

“I kept **praying** and praying,” Grandpa says.

Then he could move his legs. Finally, he could stand and walk.

“I had no money, no medicine and no doctor,” Grandpa exclaims. “Jesus healed me!”

Today, Grandpa is a follower of Jesus. Once he regained the ability to walk, he started attending the Lhomi church in his community. His wife comes with him. Although she is not yet a believer, she sits outside the building and listens to the sermons. Grandpa hopes to be baptized soon.

Though it has been three years since he did any mountain trekking, Grandpa also hopes one day to hike again. He wants to return to his village, which requires a plane ride, a jeep ride and three days of walking.

“When I am strong, I will go to my village,” Grandpa says. “I will tell them what Jesus did for me.”

Until then, Grandpa can be found on the streets of his community in Kathmandu, practicing his calisthenics and guiding all who will listen—not to the summit of Everest but to the God who healed him.

Tess Rivers is an IMB writer.

After Husbands Visit Heaven, Wives Find Stronger Faith

Eva Piper considered herself a shallow Christian until the accident that revitalized her faith and turned her Baptist pastor husband, **Don Piper**, into the best-selling author of 90

Minutes in Heaven.

“It wasn’t until Don’s accident that I really opened myself up to a really honest relationship with the Lord,” says Eva Piper, who says she’s embarrassed to recall her superficial **faith**.

Eva Piper writes about life after her husband’s alleged visit to heaven in *A Walk Through the Dark*, released on July 30. Her book comes nine years after the publication of her husband’s book, which spent more than five years on *The New York Times*’ best-seller list.

While survivors’ tales of visiting the pearly gates have been a boon for publishers, they’ve also had a more direct impact on spouses and parents. For the family members, life—and faith—changes nearly as much as it did for the men they nearly lost.

Don Piper was hit by a semi-truck while driving home, and paramedics pronounced him dead at the scene. But 90 minutes later, he says he was prayed back to life by a fellow pastor.

Eva Piper’s book, which is more of a practical guide for caregivers, recalls her frustration with her husband’s disappointment at being brought back to earth and long nights spent beside hospital beds asking God, “Why?”

The niche genre of “to heaven and back” books have hit bookshelves with surprising regularity—and success—in recent years. The popular book *Heaven Is for Real* is being adapted into a movie, coming out in 2014.

Todd and Sonja Burpo, the parents whose 4-year-old son Colton is the subject of *Heaven Is for Real*, have their own book out, *Heaven Changes Everything*, about the impact their son’s near-death experience had on their lives. The original book has sold more than 7.5 million copies after 22 printings.

Writer Paula Black has recounted her husband Dale's trip to heaven following a plane crash he survived at age 19. She intersperses her narrative with questions she asked her husband—ones she thought a reader would ask.

"We haven't felt like it was the right time to do anything with it, but we probably will at some point," Paula Black says of the as-yet-unpublished book.

"That's because it's impacted me so much."

Her husband wasn't initially interested in being "one of those people," writing about something that can't be proven. But eventually, she says, it had such an impact on her that he finally agreed to include it in his 2010 book, *Flight to Heaven*.

"It has completely transformed my faith," says Paula Black, who didn't hear about her husband's trip to heaven until 40 years after the fact.

She says Dale Black's experience allowed her to grasp the concept that God is love, which took on a new reality and depth after he told her about heaven. Raised Christian, Paula Black says talking with her husband about his experience brought substance to her faith and enriched Scripture.

"It changed my understanding of who God is," she says. "I had a saving relationship through Jesus, but it brought it so much alive."

Her husband originally planned to write a book about surviving a "non-survivable crash," but when Paula Black found out he'd been to heaven, she says that had to be in his book. "It has defined you," she told him. "Heaven changed you."

Both wives say their husbands' accounts made heaven more real for them. The same is true for Annette Wiese, whose husband, Bill Wiese, penned *23 Minutes in Hell* in 2006. She says she

had never given much thought to hell before the book.

“I never realized how important the decision of faith is to that degree and impact,” she says. She believed her husband’s vision right away, “because I knew his character.”

Despite the positive approaches and renewed faiths of these wives, many critics have worked to dispel firsthand afterlife accounts.

Esquire magazine recently reported on Eben Alexander (author of *Proof of Heaven*) as a man looking to reinvent himself in the wake of a rocky neurosurgery career. Oliver Sacks, a noted neurologist, recently dissected the scientific explanation for out-of-body and near-death experiences that lead to religious epiphanies in *The Atlantic*.

“While it is understandable that one might attribute value, ground beliefs, or construct narratives from them, hallucinations cannot provide evidence for the existence of any metaphysical beings or places,” Sacks wrote. “They provide evidence only of the brain’s power to create them.”

Eva Piper says she’s received a scattering of negative emails and notes, “but far less than I imagined.” Most people, she says, “really, really want to know about heaven. They want to know that there’s a better place than where we’re living now.”

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Why Reaching Men Is Becoming Critical

My father-in-law and I have lunch once a week. Last Monday our waitress, Stephanie (not her real name), seemed a little down so I struck up a conversation.

She told us the parking lot in front of the restaurant had flooded during a torrential Florida storm the day before and now her car wouldn't start. She had tears in her eyes, so I

knew there had to be more to the story.

I guessed she was so overwhelmed by what for most of us would be a small inconvenience because she didn't have much money. I told her how sorry we were and that we would say a prayer for her when we prayed over lunch.

Then I asked her a few more questions. She is 26 years old, a single mom with 6- and 8-year-old boys, and has no family in Orlando. The father of her children isn't in the picture—he's a bad actor. So she's left to raise two sons without a father figure by working for tips.

Her mother died when she was 14 and her younger brother was 8 years old. Their father did not step up. Perhaps he didn't know how, but he failed them. She made some bad choices, but now she's trying to do the right thing by her two sons. Yet she worries they have no male influence.

When she brought our food, she started walking away. On impulse, I called her back and invited her to join us as we prayed; she did, and I sensed that God encouraged her heart.

Then she went on to say she was deeply worried about her younger brother, now 20, who, without a positive father figure, is on the cusp of becoming a bad actor too. So I told her about the work we do with men and gave her a copy of *The Man in the Mirror* for him.

I don't know if I will ever see Stephanie again. I hope so. But if not, Dad and I did what we could that day. I trust God is already sovereignly orchestrating others to make appearances in her life. And I will continue to pray for her as the Lord brings her to mind.

It's an all too familiar pattern, isn't it? Stephanie has five men in her life. Her father? A bad actor. The father of her children? A bad actor. Her brother? Which way will he go? Her two sons? What will become of them?

What a perfect example of why God wants us to disciple men. Experiences like this are why we can never, and will never, tire or lose our passion to help evangelize and disciple men. The mission of men's discipleship is for all of the broken people, like Stephanie and her sons, left in the wake of misguided men. Those men have no idea of the destructive forces they are setting in motion that will devastate multiple generations.

That's why we must urgently help every church disciple every man.

Patrick Morley is founder and CEO of Man in the Mirror. After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, he founded Man in the Mirror, a nonprofit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the best-selling author of The Man in the Mirror, No Man Left Behind, Dad in the Mirror, and A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines.

When the Prophetic Word Brings Spiritual Warfare

When I was young in the Lord, I always hoped the pastor would have a prophetic word for me in the prayer line or that the visiting prophet would call me out of the congregation and **prophecy** over me. Now, I'm not so eager for that next prophetic word.

As I matured and learned how to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit for myself, I realized I didn't need a prophet to tell me—and announce to the principalities and powers—what the Lord's next step was for my life. And as I matured, I also

noticed a pattern: Prophetic words bring **spiritual warfare**.

Think about it for a minute. A **prophetic word** is God announcing His specific will for you. The words of edification, exhortation or comfort don't tend to stir up many devils, but directional prophecies or revelatory words about assignments, callings or destinies, in my experience, give the enemy a new agenda.

In other words, once the enemy has prophetic intelligence on where God wants to take you he'll be sure to set up snares along your path to getting there—whether that's a Judas to betray you, a sickness to slow you down, financial distress to freak you out, relationship woes, or just plain stressful situations that cause you to forget all about the prophecy and put out your personal fires.

Facing Your Goliath

This is scriptural. Two examples that come to mind are David and Joseph. David was the prophesied king, anointed by Samuel in the midst of his brothers (see 1 Sam. 16:13). But David went through hell and back before the prophetic act became a reality. In fact, he was almost immediately taken from his home and assigned to become the then-King Saul's armor-bearer. In the next breath, he was facing the battle of all battles with the giant Goliath.

You know the story. When David defeated Goliath against all natural odds, Saul became jealous and tried to kill him. David ended up fleeing into the wilderness and ran into all sorts of dangers along the way as Saul's army pursued him. His wives were captured. His men turned against him. David's psalms reveal the emotions of a man facing warfare to see his prophetic destiny become a reality.

Then there's Joseph. He had two prophetic dreams as a teenager. Both dreams essentially indicated that he would rule over his older brothers. When they found out, the warfare

began. Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery. He was falsely accused of trying to trying to rape Potiphar's wife. And he was thrown into prison.

Prepare for War

Yes, when you receive a true **prophetic word** from God it brings spiritual warfare. You probably won't be chased through the wilderness by a jealous king, but you may be chased out of your church by a jealous pastor. You may not be sold into slavery, but you may be betrayed by those closest to you. You may not be falsely accused of rape, but you may be falsely accused of something. You may not be thrown into prison, but you may be thrown out of your comfort zone.

Spiritual warfare comes in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes it's disobedient children who get into trouble because they lost their way. Nothing hurts worse than seeing a child go astray. Sometimes it's the sickness of financial pressures I mentioned before. Sometimes it's a raging battle in your mind that causes you to bite down on the enemy's bait, whether that's burnout, depression, confusion or something else.

Some years ago I received a prophetic word from Dino Kartsonakis, the late Kathryn Kuhlman's piano player. I have long been an admirer of Kuhlman's ministry so this was really cool. Kartsonakis' word wasn't ultra specific, but it was nonetheless a prophetic announcement. Some weeks later, I was on the phone with Doug Stringer, who released a **prophetic prayer** over me along the same lines.

That's always exciting, but it brought tremendous warfare. I spent the next 18 months battling a nasty controlling religious spirit that targeted my life and ministry for destruction. Through other circumstances, my daughter also fell into life-and-death danger as the enemy worked in her midst. One of my best friends was almost killed in a head-on collision with a drunk driver. And the list goes on and on. The warfare was intense, but now I am beginning to see the

first fruits of those two prophecies delivered years ago.

Enduring the Spiritual Battle

How did I get through it? God's grace, of course, but I also took Paul the apostle's advice to Timothy: I waged war with the prophetic words. Paul said, "This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18). The New Living Translation puts it this way: "Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight well in the Lord's battles."

What does that practically mean? It means I continued to declare the prophetic word over my life. Although a prophetic word is not on par with Scripture, a **prophecy** that's been judged true can be used as a sword in the **spiritual realm** to do battle against the enemy's assignment. After all, the enemy doesn't really care about you. He hates you, yes, but ultimately he just doesn't want the prophetic word to come to pass because when it does God's will comes to the earth.

If you are in a season of waiting and warring, hold on. Remember, it was at least 15 years between David's prophetic anointing and David's kingship. And it was about 13 years in between Joseph's dream and his promotion to Egypt's prime minister. Chances are, it won't take that long for you to see the first fruits of those powerful prophetic words spoken over your life. But even if it does, don't give in to the enemy's strategies. Remember that this is the Lord's battle. Declare the prophetic word over your life and keep fighting the good fight of faith. Amen.

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Jennifer Lopez Forwards Gay Agenda With Lesbian Wedding on TV

Jennifer Lopez's new TV drama *The Fosters* will make history on Monday evening when it becomes the first U.S. show to feature a same-sex wedding since the demise of America's Defense of Marriage Act.

Teri Polo and Sherri Saum, who play lesbian moms on the show, will exchange vows during the episode. Executive producer Peter Paige insists the nuptials storyline was written in June, before gay unions became legal—and the episode was going to air on Aug. 5, no matter what.

He tells *TV Guide Magazine*, “We knew the Supreme Court would likely make its decision before we shot. If they had ruled the other way we would have still gone ahead—only with an f— you wedding! But because the court did rule the way it did, it was an even more resonant celebration.”

Lopez is a producer on the show.

Judge Blocks One Restriction on Wisconsin Abortion Doctors

A federal judge on Friday blocked a portion of a Wisconsin law that requires doctors who perform **abortions** to have admitting privileges at a hospital near their practice.

U.S. District Judge William Conley last month temporarily stopped the measure, days after Republican Governor Scott Walker signed it into law, and his latest ruling extends that indefinitely while a lawsuit proceeds against the provision.

Planned Parenthood, which filed the suit, is challenging the requirement that doctors performing an abortion have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of their practice.

The group, which sued in partnership with another **abortion** provider called Affiliated Medical Services, contends the law would create such hurdles for doctors that abortion in Wisconsin would only be available in the large cities of Madison and Milwaukee.

Conley, in his 44-page ruling, expressed similar concerns.

“Even if there were some evidence that the admitting privileges requirement would actually further women’s health, any benefit is greatly outweighed by the burdens caused by increased travel, decreased access and, at least for some women, the denial of an in-state option for **abortion** services,” Conley wrote in his opinion released on Friday.

A representative for Walker could not be reached for comment late on Friday, and the anti-abortion group Wisconsin Right to Life did not return calls.

“In Wisconsin, Texas, North Carolina and elsewhere we are seeing an unprecedented wave of attacks on women’s health, and

people are fed up with it," Planned Parenthood Federation of America president Cecile Richards said in a statement following Conley's ruling.

Earlier this week, North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory signed into law sweeping new restrictions on **abortion** clinics, including an admitting privileges requirement.

Texas Governor **Rick Perry** last month signed into law a similar statute as part of a sweeping measure that followed 12 other states in banning **abortions** at later than 20 weeks of pregnancy.

In previous rulings in Mississippi and Alabama, courts have blocked admitting privilege requirements for physicians who perform **abortions**.

Anti-abortion activists, frustrated at their failure to roll back the landmark 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision that found women have a constitutional right to terminate pregnancy, have in recent years turned to enacting new abortion limits in states with Republican-controlled legislatures.

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Baseball Star Josh Hamilton Gives Up Right to 'Play Hard, Pray Harder'

Josh Hamilton, the All-Star right-fielder for the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, has agreed to a mediated resolution of a trademark dispute with a Dallas-based entity over rights to the slogan "Play Hard, Pray Harder."

In mid-2012, a Raleigh-based company called ScriptureArt launched a line of clothing inspired by Hamilton's life and testimony. The clothing line included T-shirts carrying graphical designs of the message "Play Hard, Pray Harder"—a phrase Hamilton began using in 2006 to help in his recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. In 2008, Hamilton began incorporating the phrase into talks in which he encouraged others in their walk with God.

Hamilton's intent was always to give any royalties from sales of the clothing licensed by ScriptureArt in support for his charitable FourTwelve Foundation.

In December 2012, both Hamilton and ScriptureArt were sued by an entity calling itself "Play Hard Pray Harder LLC" over use of the phrase. Both sides eventually agreed to mediation, and the settlement will allow both parties to move forward and avoid a costly court battle.

"In the spirit of Matthew 5:39–40, I have settled the lawsuit over the commercial use of the phrase 'Play Hard, Pray Harder,' a phrase I've used regularly since 2006 and publicly since 2008," Hamilton says. "We will continue to look for creative ways to generate additional support for the FourTwelve Foundation."

Regarding the mediated agreement, Hamilton says, "I'm happy to have this distraction resolved so the FourTwelve Foundation and I can move forward in our mission of helping and encouraging others."

The FourTwelve Foundation makes grants to organizations engaged in providing assistance to people in need, both in this country and abroad.