

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 discipled. 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 discipled.

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.

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