

MINISTERING TO WOMEN IN TIMES OF PERSONAL CRISIS: CHRISTIAN CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTERS

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When *Roe v. Wade* was passed in 1973 the churches for the most part were silent. In my memory there have always been a few homes where the pregnant, unmarried were sent to have their babies in a secluded environment or the secret abortion was obtained. The openness of the sexual revolution has brought problems into our churches. Amazing statistics report that 73% of women getting abortions call themselves Christian. 15% of them call themselves “evangelical” or “born again.” Legislation has been introduced in several states to impose restrictions on abortions. Some have passed, but more have failed.

What is the church to do? “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this; to visit orphans and widows in their trouble” (James 1:27, NKJV). I believe unborn children and single (often abandoned) women and mothers qualify as orphans and widows.

There are many pro-life agencies that may or may not have a Biblical basis. Some of their practices should be questioned. The Crisis Pregnancy Centers of Pierce County where I volunteer, operates under Care Net, a branch of the Christian Action Council which was founded in 1975. The founding purpose was to challenge abortion and provide help to encourage women to carry their babies either to parent or give them up for adoption. In later years they have added challenges to fetal tissue research, genetic engineering, infanticide, assisted suicide, and euthanasia. The Doctrinal statement is scripturally sound and must be adhered to by all centers operating under Care Net. The first center opened in Tacoma in 1980. In 1984 Sanctity of Human Life Sunday was established.

I believe the first step in the church must be to educate and guard our own young people and as far as possible “to keep them unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Let our churches be steadfast in this sexually irresponsible culture where movies and TV are increasingly bold in their sexual exposures. We need to reach youth with biblical truths about right relationships, virtuous love, and the truth that abstinence before marriage is the only way to honor God and is the only 100% contraceptive. “Hear my children the instruction of a father — Do not enter the path of the wicked and do not walk in the way of evil” (Prov. 4:1,14). “Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding. He who does it destroys his own soul” (Prov. 6:32). I believe the whole book of Proverbs to be a valuable standard for all.

Each crisis pregnancy center may offer different services depending on the founding board, support of churches, and number of volunteers.

A prayerful group in Tacoma started in 1983 to provide a 24-hour counseling service via telephone. In February of 1984 the first center opened offering free pregnancy tests and counseling. Soon a supply center offering maternity and baby clothing was added. An hour is allocated for the testing and counseling session. If the client claims to be Christian she is asked

if she is active in her relationship to the Lord. If she makes no profession, the gospel is presented. If the test is negative she is counseled in changing her life style and warned of the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases. If the test is positive there are three possibilities. She can carry the child and raise it, give the child up for adoption, or abort the baby. Counseling is directed at whichever possibility she is considering. Development of the baby is always discussed with fetal models showing the present stage of her pregnancy. We refer the client to agencies that help with financial and medical need or Christian adoption agencies. There are some Christian homes for those who have no family support.

We have a new medical ministry with volunteer doctors and nurses. The ultra-sound exam is effective in changing the pro-abortion mind to a pro-life mind.

The offering of supplies to those in need has proved a real blessing as time is given to find the spiritual needs behind the material needs. Again the gospel is presented and the client prayed with. Since service is allowed only once a month, we get "repeat" clients and some for more than one pregnancy.

In recent years other services have been added. One of the most important has been the Post Abortion Counseling and Education (PACE) program. One of the big secrets of the abortion industry is the emotional trauma, usually suppressed, which may surface years after the initial deed. Women are led through a Bible study helping them find forgiveness from God and restoration of peace. There is much said in the Bible about the importance of first born sons; "Sanctify to Me all the first-born" (Ex. 13:2). As we remember David's grief over the loss of his son, begotten in an adulterous relationship, we are beginning a ministry to the hurting fathers of unwanted pregnancies.

Operation Self Respect (OSR) is a presentation of abstinence-based sex education and dating practices. It is useful in church youth groups and especially in public and private school health classes. We can't get into schools unless we are invited to come. Urge your schools to provide abstinence-based instruction.

How can you or your church get involved? Psalm 116:12-13 asks, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" and answers, "I will take up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord." Prayer is the foundation for any service to our Lord. Also:

- Ask Him how He would have you serve.
- Pray for the centers already established that they will see fruit in souls and babies saved.
- Take the required training course and become a volunteer. There are varied opportunities from sorting donated items, office work, or serving on the Hotline in your own home.
- Donate used items, perhaps holding a church-wide baby shower. Anything for a baby or pregnant mom is accepted.

Christ promised a place in the kingdom to those who gave food and drink, clothed the naked, visited the sick. "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did

it unto Me” (Matt. 25:40).

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