

THE 5-MINUTE PRO-LIFER



Making the Case for Life Like It's Never Been Heard Before.

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Wisdom Calling

When it comes to speaking up for the unborn, pastors don't just need courage; they need wisdom.

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Legalized abortion will come to an earlier demise when the pro-life movement enjoys greater pastoral influence and leadership in the battle for life. Thankfully, there are pastors who faithfully blow Ezekiel's trumpet on the issue of abortion. But sadly, in too many churches, it is the sheep, not the shepherds, who lead this charge. Unlike the civil rights movement, which was led by pastors and church leaders, the pro-life movement enjoys very little pastoral support or leadership. By and large, the American pulpit is mute on the issue of abortion. As a result, some pro-lifers have become disillusioned, even embittered, by their pastors' silence, dismissing all pastors as cowards and abandoning any hope of engaging them. Though this frustration is often justified because many pastors do lack the nerve, be careful not to assume this about your pastor.

While we all recognize the need for pastors to have courage to address abortion from their pulpits, what is often overlooked is the additional need for *wisdom*. Pastors who speak up for the preborn in America today are not fed to lions or sawed in two for having done so. This is not to suggest your pastor won't pay at least a modest price for speaking truthfully. However, the pastor who speaks to this emotion-laden and often divisive issue without wisdom runs the risk of making a mess for himself and his congregation. On the other hand, the pastor who approaches this "taboo" subject with wisdom engages in a winning proposition, since God honors both prudence and faithfulness.

Speaking wisely about abortion requires the pastor to do three things. First, he must speak truthfully, heralding the sanctity of human life and clearly declaring abortion sin. Second, he must speak redemptively, pointing those who have participated in abortion to Jesus Christ, the only One who can provide forgiveness and freedom from the penalty and guilt of sin. Third, he must speak intelligently, equipping his flock with sound arguments and compelling reasons to be pro-life.

There is no question about it: Abortion is an unpleasant subject and a tough one for pastors to deal with. Understandably, many pastors view teaching on this subject as burdensome. They know for many in their congregations, abortion is a deeply personal issue that invokes painful memories and feelings of guilt. Some Christians mistakenly see abortion as merely a "political issue" that should remain off-limits for the church. Still others are "tired of hearing about abortion." And, finally, some think of abortion as a "necessary evil;" they don't like it, but hold to the popular mantra, "abortion should be safe, legal and rare." It is the hurt, confusion and callousness behind each of these responses that summon pastors to address this topic, and to do so with wisdom and skill. Rather than a burden, the subject of abortion, when approached in this manner, provides a valuable ministry opportunity for your pastor and benefits his congregation in at least three ways.

First, the pastor who approaches abortion with wisdom saves lives.

What an enviable position the wise pastor finds himself in; his teaching can directly save the lives of little boys and girls from his own flock! Conversely, when pastors remain silent about abortion, babies die. The silence of the shepherds paves the way for the silencing of the little lambs. Though statistics vary on the numbers of professing Christians who obtain abortions, it cannot be denied that when faced with the consequences of an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy, many professing Christians choose abortion. Pastors who abdicate their responsibility to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves" (Proverbs 31:8), unwittingly usher their churches into an unstated but

abhorrent partnership with the abortion industry, paving the way for the destruction of children from their own congregations. Shepherds are called to guard the sheep, even those sheep that have yet to be born. On the bright side, it's not just paramedics and emergency room surgeons who save human lives. So does the pastor who addresses the subject of abortion wisely.

Secondly, the pastor who approaches the subject of abortion with wisdom leads those who have been hurt by abortion to forgiveness and healing.

The subject of abortion is a Gospel issue - a "*loving your neighbor as yourself*" issue. But it is also a Gospel *opportunity* when approached wisely, presenting pastors and those under their care with opportunities to turn discussions about abortion into conversations that center on the universal need for forgiveness and the Gospel of grace.

Our neighbors don't know it, but their eternal well-being depends upon our understanding of the Good News. Is the Gospel the remedy for all sin or only for those sins that are most comfortably exposed? Our churches are filled with women who have had abortions and men who have encouraged or even forced women to get them. A pastor's silence on abortion alienates these folks by unintentionally communicating that their sin is unforgiveable, so much so that it cannot even be spoken of. This silence leaves them in the lonely prison of guilt and shame. They need the forgiveness Christ offers. When abortion is exposed as sin, and confessed as such, this forgiveness becomes possible. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret." (2 Corinthians 7:10).

The pastor who chooses silence over faithfulness exposes the fact that he either doesn't see abortion *as all that bad*, or doesn't see the Gospel *as all that good* (or both). "His silence on the issue," says LTI president Scott Klusendorf, "does not spare post-abortion men and women guilt - it spares them healing." However, the path of wisdom, "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), sets people free and grows mature congregations. It is a sweet thing to hear testimony of a post-abortive man or woman who has found this freedom.

Thirdly, the pastor who approaches the subject of abortion with wisdom equips his congregation to engage the culture.

In recent years a growing amount of attention has been devoted to making churches "relevant." "Relevance" is a buzzword in church-planting and church growth seminars. However, this new brand of relevance is generally defined, not by the dictates of Scripture, but by fashion and the whimsical desires of the religious consumer. Ignored are the thousands of mothers in crisis pregnancies and their little ones, the targets of "choice" - hardly a description of true relevance.

Now, someone might argue that there are other relevant issues besides abortion. This is true. But it might be helpful for us to remember that slavery was the dominant moral issue in America in the 1860s and killing Jews was the dominant moral issue in Germany in the 1940s. These were so because the institution of slavery and the machinery of Nazism systematically marginalized, devalued, and left vulnerable millions of innocent human beings.

So too, since abortion unjustly ends the lives of 3,400 innocent human beings *each day* in America, abortion is *the* dominant and defining moral issue of our time. This is why so many are talking about abortion today in our schools, across the water cooler, and in the halls of Congress. Sadly, however, most professing Christians are ill-equipped to face-off in a persuasive manner with the philosophical Goliath of "choice"- a giant that will ultimately be brought down, not by brute force, but with good arguments and an artful method. The pastor who trains his flock here can truly boast of a relevant church. Bright lights and tattooed pastors may render a church stylish or trendy and may bring in big crowds, but relevance is a label reserved only for the church that is willing to love the ones who are most unpopular to love.

Getting your pastor to talk about abortion will likely require someone to talk about abortion with your pastor. That someone might just be you. Prayerfully consider meeting with your pastor face-to-face for the purpose of sharing your concern for mothers and the preborn children of your church and community. Kindly help him see the advantages that addressing abortion offers when approached wisely. Direct him to the ministry of Life Training Institute. We are prepared to help him make the most of his opportunity, because the days are evil indeed and wise shepherds are desperately needed.

Ephesians 5:15-16, "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."