

Gospel-centered & Non-political Things Every Pastor Can Do to Decrease the Impact of Abortion

*Adapted from [Dr. Greg Austen](#)

Abortion is a global issue that now affects 40-50 million unborn children every year: As a pastor, I'm with others who see this as one of, if not, *the* greatest moral atrocity of our day. I want to make one thing clear, however:

I understand why many good pastors choose not to talk about abortion.

I also know that, for many, it's not because they're cowards or unwilling to talk about hard things. It's because abortion is too closely tied to partisan politics and they want to have a winsome voice in their community. With the apostle Paul, their cry is, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2, NIV)

Again, I get their perspective and respect their priorities. In what follows, however, I want to make a research-based, gospel-centered, and non-political case for why a greater sense of urgency is needed among pastors that are skilled at attracting and speaking to those that are *not* yet disciples of Jesus Christ. Whether a church planter with a congregation of twenty or a senior pastor of a mega-church, here are things every pastor can do to decrease the impact of abortion in their congregation and community.

Talk about abortion and other life issues from the pulpit and in non-political ways.

If you think about it, pastors are always talking about life issues, partly because Jesus is *the* Life. We apply Scripture to issues affecting human flourishing from the womb to the tomb. Among these life issues (creation care, human trafficking, foster care and adoption, etc.); however, abortion will always have a special place because you can't experience the fullness God intended (Jn. 10:10) if you don't have a birthday.

Further, abortion is a problem in the church, not just "out there." Our research shows — and other studies corroborate— that two out of five women who have had abortions were attending church at least once a month at the time of their first abortion. We can't just delegate this sensitive issue to pregnancy centers when we have men and women considering abortion right in our midst. We need to learn to speak to the fears and idols of their hearts with compassion, hope, and help.

Further, we need to make sure anyone who steps forward to assist those considering abortion is trained and sensitized to this issue. On average, there are nine days between when a woman learns she is pregnant and makes a decision related to abortion. That means there is only one Sunday in that window and we need to be ready. Here are three excellent examples of how to talk about abortion holistically and with the right tone:

- [Roland Warren on what pro-life “victory” really looks like.](#)
- [Pastor David Platt on “Praying and Working for Justice: Abortion](#)
- [Care Net’s e-book, 10 Things Not to Do When a Woman Tells You She Wants an Abortion.](#)

Make sure the post-abortive know their sins are not excluded from the forgiveness of Christ.

A Christian woman wrote to me recently and said, “I had an abortion when I was younger and I didn't want to do it... I will go to my grave hating myself...” In responding, I explained that “Jesus died and went to his grave loving you and then rose triumphant from that grave. He came to justify the ungodly like all of us. It’s important for you to receive that love. To say, ‘I will go to my grave hating myself’ is to view yourself in a different way than God views you. In fact, Tim Keller notes that “When people say, ‘I know God forgives me, but I can't forgive myself,’ they mean that they have failed an idol [in this case, themselves], whose approval is more important than God's.”

Pastor, consider adapting a statement like the following and using it at least once a year as part of your preparatory remarks before communion:

"As your pastor, I care deeply about your spiritual growth. Many of you may have hearts that are burdened with sins from your past. For some sins, it is harder for us to receive the forgiveness Christ offers than for others. Especially sins committed against the body. Sexual sin and abortion are difficult to share and receive healing for. But the cross is open to all, and the Lord's table is for all that ask for His forgiveness. There is healing available for grieving hearts that regret their involvement in abortion. Abortion is not the unforgivable sin. Our Savior went to the cross for all sins. Please come to the table and lay your burdens down."

Thank you for all you do and thanks for considering how critical your leadership is in mobilizing intelligent, loving, gospel-centered, and non-political ministry to the abortion-vulnerable. As we often say, the courts can make abortion illegal but only God through his church can make it unthinkable. Our prayers are with you and we are here to support you in any way that we can.

*[Read the full article.](#)