Why Supporting a Crisis Pregnancy Center is Not Enough

By Cheryl Sullenger

During pro-life outreaches to the churches we frequently run into perplexed Christians who cannot understand why we ask them to maintain a Christian testimony outside the local abortion clinics. Their chief defense against such action is that they support a crisis pregnancy center. This act, in their thinking, absolves them of any further responsibility in the matter of abortion. But does it?

The crisis pregnancy center’s mission has evolved over the years since I first volunteered for one in the mid 1980’s. At that time, unlike today, the centers saw many women who came in thinking the pro-life office was actually an abortion clinic. Using graphic images and a now-outdated video called “A Matter of Choice” many woman changed their minds about abortion and saved their babies.

As I worked at counseling women at a San Diego area crisis pregnancy center, or CPC, (now no longer in business), I was confronted one day by a tearful, angry woman. “Where were you when I needed you,” she cried. “If you had been at the abortion clinic when I had my abortion, I would have kept my baby!” I realized she was attempting to shift the blame of her abortion onto me but I nevertheless became troubled at the fact that many more women than we could ever reach bypassed the CPC option and went straight to the abortion clinics. “What about these women?” I thought. Having had much success in changing the minds of truly abortion-minded women, I knew that if we took our counseling to the street in front of the abortion offices we could save even more lives.

I met a gentleman who did “sidewalk counseling” at the old WomanCare abortion clinic, then located in a rundown converted house in a homosexual neighborhood near downtown and decided to join him there. As we stood on the street trying to hand out pro-life brochures while dodging the homosexual clinic escorts, the police arrived and told us to move across the street or be arrested. This being my first time on the street and because I wanted to be a good witness to the police, I moved. Just then a couple came up to the abortion clinic. It was clear that the woman was distraught. I fidgeted on the street, unsure of what to do, especially with a police officer at my elbow trying to intimidate us into leaving. A few minutes after the couple went in, the woman emerged in tears. She had a clipboard with the abortion consent forms still in her hand. Her boyfriend followed her around the corner where she stood weeping. As I was about to call out to them the police officer told me I was not allowed to speak. I waited anxiously as I saw the boyfriend put his arm around her neck and forcibly drag her, still sobbing, into the mill. As this was happening the officer next to me said, “If you say one word you are going to jail.” I did not speak, and the woman went inside and did not come out again while we were there.

I have felt an intense regret for putting my good reputation and personal safety above the life of that child and well-being of that poor woman. I learned a valuable
lesson that day. I understood for the first time how vitally important the outreaches at the clinics are. Without Christians offering help to these women who fall through the CPC safety net, many women will abort who would not if they were given compassion and love when and where they needed it most. I promised that next time I would speak out on behalf of the woman and her child in obedience to Proverbs 31:8-9 and other scriptural mandates, then trust God to take care of me. Many have tried to make me stop this work, but I know that I must obey God in this matter, rather than man, be it a police officer or a misguided pastor.

Today, many in the churches want us to accept that supporting a CPC is enough and that they have no further responsibility in the matter of abortion. However, that excuse falls flat when we consider the thousands of women who will never take advantage of the CPCs, which today mostly offer their assistance to women who have already decided to carry their babies to term. **It is my estimate that approximately 1,000 abortions take place in San Diego County alone each week.** Now take into consideration the hundreds of communities in our nation where abortion clinics operate, and the numbers become staggering. Are we just to abandon these women to the hands of the abortionists only to come to their aid after the fact with “post-abortion counseling?” This is the equivalent of the priest and the Levite passing by on the other side of the road to avoid their responsibility to render aid to the beaten man. Jesus told us to follow instead the example of the Good Samaritan. Did the Samaritan simply pray for the beaten man when he returned to the comfortable confines of his local church? Did the Samaritan open an office where beaten and robbed people could make appointments for assistance? This sounds absurd, of course, but this is how the church has largely dealt with the matter of abortion.

The abandonment by the church of the women and their pre-born children scheduled to die at our local mills is an intolerable situation. The crisis pregnancy centers offer support to women who have decided to keep their babies, but the CPCs cannot reach the thousands of women **per week** who have scheduled to kill their babies at our country’s abortion mills **not are they designed to.** But sidewalk counselors and prayer teams can. The effectiveness of a peaceful Christian testimony at the mills is proven to save lives and change hearts.

However, we find often-hostile resistance from the pastors who intimidate their congregations into silence, thus bringing the bloodguilt of those aborted children they abandoned upon them and their congregations. Supporting a crisis pregnancy center, while admirable, is not enough. In the name of Christian Charity, let’s stop treating these abortion-bound women and their babies like they do not exist or are not important and give them the same care, love, and meaningful assistance that we, as a Church, provide to those who have decided to give birth. Let us follow the example of the Good Samaritan, find the abortion site nearest us and, as Jesus said, “Go and do likewise.”

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