

FATHERS IN CRISIS:

DADS ARE KEY TO PREVENTING ABORTIONS

By Michael Leaser

When you walk into a crisis pregnancy center, you're usually met with a clean, attractive waiting room, appointed with some pleasant paintings, a few comfortable chairs, perhaps a sofa and a coffee table holding a variety of magazines. You see the usual titles, such as *Today's Christian Woman*, *Families*, *Celebrate Life*, but more and more you can expect to find copies of *New Man* or *Sports Spectrum*. Why would magazines geared toward men be found in a crisis pregnancy center? To keep them occupied while their partner has a pregnancy test? Of course, but also because Christian men's magazines are a small part of a growing movement among CPCs to include men in the services they offer.



Since the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision, all decisions regarding pre-born children rest with the mother; but in reality, the father may carry the most influence over whether a baby is brought to term. The Guttmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood's own research organ, conducted several surveys of approximately 2,000 women who went to Planned Parenthood for abortions. In its May 4 release, the institute stated:

On average, women give four reasons for choosing abortion. Three-fourths of women cite concern for or responsibility to other individuals; three-fourths say they cannot afford a child; three-fourths say that having a baby would interfere with work, school or the ability to care for dependents; and half say they do not want to be a single parent or are having problems with their husband or partner.

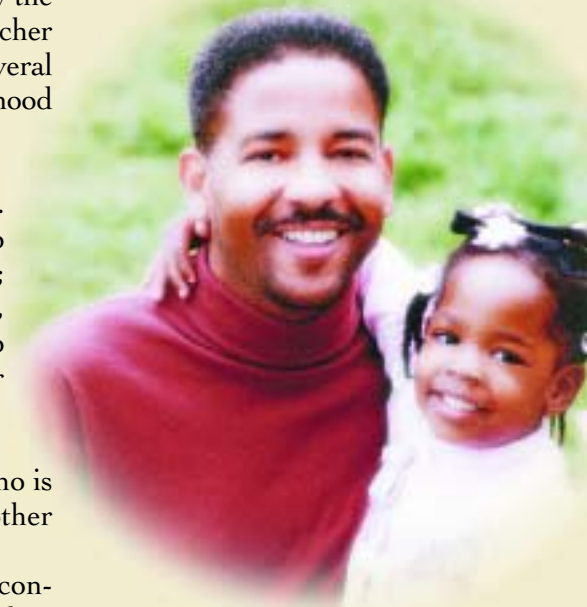
The fourth reason obviously points to the absence of a father who is willing to provide physical and/or emotional support, but so do the other three reasons.

Women who "cite concern for other individuals" are often concerned with the reaction their partner might have to a pregnancy. They will often perceive anything other than an overwhelmingly positive reaction from their partner as a sign that their partner doesn't want the baby. Again, sadly, after the *Roe v. Wade* decision, lower court decisions and follow-up legislation about abortion have stripped fathers of all rights regarding their preborn children. Therefore, many men have been conditioned to detach themselves from crisis pregnancies, allowing them to say, quite reasonably, that it's "not my choice," even though an expressed desire to keep a child may be all a mother needs to dissuade her from having an abortion.

Women who say they can't afford a child often lack the financial assistance that a father can provide in attending to the many costs involved with child rearing. Those women who assert that having a child would interfere with work may need to work full-time to support themselves because they don't have a partner who can bear the primary breadwinning responsibilities while they give a child the near-constant care and attention he or she needs.

National CPC responses

Given the substantial role a father plays in a woman's decision to carry a child to term, the two largest crisis pregnancy center networks in the country have begun incorporating men's ministry programs in their national conferences. Heartbeat International, which oversees more than 950 CPCs nationwide, invited Roland Warren, director of the National Fatherhood Initiative, to deliver one of the keynote addresses at its annual conference in Orlando last May. The conference also offered workshops on "Getting Fathers Involved," "Getting Clients to Choose Marriage," and "Men's Ministry in Pregnancy Centers."



Care Net, which supports over 900 CPCs in the United States and Canada, is offering sessions on “Ministering to Lost Fatherhood” and “Men and Women Working in Sync” at its national conference in Denver this September. NFI’s Warren will also address this conference.

Despite this recognition of the need to address the role of men in resolving crisis pregnancy situations, much more remains to be done. Only four out of 63 sessions at Heartbeat International’s conference directly relate to this problem, while Warren’s address and the two other sessions listed at the Care Net conference are only three out of 153 programs.

In the trenches

Those crisis pregnancy centers that are actively reaching out to men employ a variety of means to involve them in crisis pregnancy resolutions. When a potential female client calls a CPC to schedule an appointment for a pregnancy test and counseling, the CPC staff and volunteers who answer the phone are trained to invite her to bring her partner to the center if she still has a relationship with him.

Once at the center, a male client enters a waiting room with a neutral décor. Anything too feminine looking—though perhaps more appealing to female clients—may make men feel uncomfortable. (Try thinking from a man’s perspective; most men wouldn’t feel welcome in an overly pink environment.) Sometimes a CPC will even have a male volunteer serve as a receptionist, signaling not only to men but to women how much the center values the role of fathers in resolving crisis pregnancies.

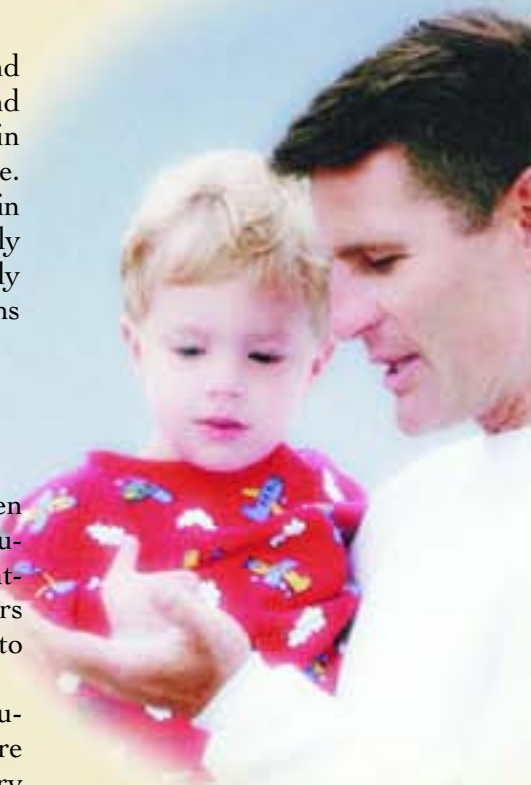
The male client finds not only a variety of Christian men’s magazines on that coffee table, but also a significant amount of abortion and parenting literature on the shelves addressed specifically to men.

One such pamphlet is “Men Hurt Too,” the title of which recognizes that men are often overlooked when an abortion has occurred or is being considered. Printed by Life Issues Institute, the brochure addresses the spiritual, emotional and physical problems that many men experience after their child has been aborted, more than three million men according to the research compiled by the institute.

Another shorter, bullet-point style brochure, “Almost a Daddy,” published by Focus on the Family, addresses many of the same issues but also points to God as a source of healing and redemption for post-abortive fathers, which is especially useful for male clients who have already had one or more children aborted and feel that another abortion won’t make a difference since they think they are already condemned.

Yet another text available at centers, *Fatherhood Aborted: The Profound Effects of Abortion on Men*, published by Tyndale, addresses many of the same issues.

On the parenting side, a male client may find short publications like John Eldredge’s *You Have What It Takes: What Every Father Needs to Know*, a short booklet that emphasizes the power for greater good that a father has in his children’s lives and the intense joy and pride he can take in that responsibility. Another text he might find is *The New Father Book*:



What Every New Father Needs to Know to Be a Good Dad by Wade Horn and Jeffrey Rosenberg, both formerly of the National Fatherhood Initiative.

Man to man

While this textual material is informative and useful, quite often a male client simply needs to hear these principles from another guy, which is where male peer counselors come in. While a female counselor takes a female client back to a counseling room, a male counselor will sit down with the male client and discuss the crisis pregnancy situation from the male client’s perspective. The aim of a counseling session is to help uncover in the client a sense of pride and responsibility at the prospect of being a father, to help guide that pride into constructive solutions, whether that be adoption or raising the child, and if the client is inclined to raise the child, to help him find material support, where needed, and spiritual support in the form of his heavenly Father. If the client is unmarried, then the counselor will often discuss sexual purity issues, including the risks of sexually transmitted diseases and the benefits of secondary virginity, including God’s plan for sexual intimacy in marriage.

Oftentimes the male and female counselors will subsequently sit down together with the couple and discuss either their options for bringing a child to term and/or sexual purity in their relationship.

Having an integrated men’s ministry also helps centers that try to reach young men and women *before* they face a crisis pregnancy situation because such centers can effectively address both sides of a premarital romantic relationship. LifeChoices Resource Center in Fairfax, Virginia, for instance, sends its counselors, male and female, out to college groups to discuss the dangers of premarital sex, including the risks involved with using contraceptives and the ravages of STDs. The center serves as a resource for any questions or concerns regarding premarital romantic relationships and actively seeks to promote sexual purity among both men and women.

The value of men

Besides counseling, men can fill other essential functions at CPCs, including office maintenance, computer setup and operation, community and church liaison and simply maintaining a male presence. Oftentimes the most encouraging and ennobling sight that a confused and overwhelmed young father can see is another man working to help young women in need.

As CPCs continue to grow, they should bear in mind the potential impact a men’s ministry can have on saving lives, born and preborn. There are no reliable figures on the direct influence a father has over a woman’s decision to bring a child to term, but the power of a man’s declaring, “This is my child—my joy and my responsibility,” cannot be denied and should not be ignored.

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