

Philosophy of Ministry: Abortion

Research & Resource Center

U.S. Missions

May, 2017

Abortion is one of the most polarizing issues facing the United States today. People vote for or against a candidate based on that person's stance on the issue. Marches and protests center on "a woman's right to choose." Questions like "But what about rape?" and "When is it really a baby?" make for heated debate. Although the number of abortions per year has declined somewhat since their peak in the 1980's, the number continues to hover around 700,000 per year. A 2015 study indicated that over 40% of the women having abortions were churchgoers at the time of their decision to end a pregnancy, and 70% described themselves as Christian.

In accordance with the Assemblies of God position paper on abortion, U.S. Missions strongly emphasizes that human life begins at conception; therefore, an abortion is the taking of an innocent human life. Assemblies of God churches and many other evangelical churches hold this scripturally-supported view. Unfortunately, however, many women do not feel they can discuss an unintended pregnancy with their church, as indicated by the following, also from the 2015 study:

- Fewer than half of the research respondents (41%) believe churches are prepared to help with decisions about unintended pregnancies, and 54% think churches oversimplify these decisions.
- More women reported experiencing condemnation (26%) from their church than caring (16%) or helpfulness (14%).
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents believe church members are more likely to gossip about a woman considering an abortion than to help her explore and understand options.

The reality is that many women attending the average church each Sunday may have an abortion in their personal history. Men in the church, as fathers of the aborted babies, have been affected also. Many of these people have accepted Christ as Savior since their abortion experience. They know they are forgiven for ending the life of their child, but have never walked through a journey of grief and healing with the support of a caring church community. Additionally, the circumstances influencing the decision to abort are many and complicated, and are not automatically eliminated with the decision to become a Christian. Finances, domestic violence, chronic health problems, and poor relationship skills are just a few of the underlying concerns that may have contributed and may continue to cause problems. Such a quick summary can hardly do justice to the heartache surrounding the abortion question, but clearly, being a pro-life fellowship goes much deeper than voting for the right candidate or carrying a sign.

In view of the above, U.S. Missions encourages ministry in several ways:

- Provide accurate information in a loving context about exactly what an abortion does (takes a human life).

- Become knowledgeable about local resources and options available to help women who find themselves in an unintended pregnancy situation.
- Support and volunteer at local pro-life pregnancy help centers.
- Commit to walking with women who choose life for their babies, regardless of the circumstances of the baby's conception.
- Become knowledgeable about Christian ministries and agencies that facilitate adoption, support those ministries, and make that information available to women or families facing a pregnancy decision.
- Establish mentoring ministries that create friendship and caring community for women, accountability and fatherhood skills for men, and a safe place to talk for those facing a difficult situation.
- Offer support groups for those who are grieving a prior abortion.
- Offer programs that address the contributing factors to abortion—financial responsibility and job skills classes, substance abuse recovery groups, support groups for single parents, biblically sound youth programs that include relationship skills, etc.

Since not every church has the resources to do every type of ministry, partnership in communities is essential, particularly with local pregnancy help centers.

U.S. Missions currently has missionaries working in many of these areas of ministry. Missionaries, chaplains, and volunteers are assisting churches in encouraging adoption, establishing ministry to single parents, hosting recovery groups, mentoring high-risk youth transitioning out of foster care, and more. The primary focus of any pro-life ministry should be to bring people to Jesus, but in practicality, this may mean helping them walk through their messiness as they discover God's purposes for their lives.