

4 Ways to Defend
**YOUR PRO-LIFE
POSITION**

CARE  NET[®]

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INTRODUCTION

Do you want to make clearer, better, and, most importantly, more Christ-like arguments to defend your pro-life position? The frameworks in this ebook are excerpts from Roland Warren's book, *The Alternative to Abortion: Why We Must Be Pro Abundant Life*, and are designed to help you do just that. You will learn how to answer common pro-choice arguments and respond to them with a pro-life worldview based on compassion and love.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To read *The Alternative to Abortion: Why We Must Be Pro Abundant* go to: www.rolandcwarren.com or use the QR code below. For more articles like this, and to watch videos and access other resources covering topics such as pregnancy center ministry, motherhood, marriage, and the Pro Abundant Life movement, visit Care Net's blog subscription page www.care-net.org/blogs.

To subscribe and listen to CareCast™, Care Net's podcast on family, faith, and life with Roland Warren (Care Net's president and CEO) and Vincent DiCaro (Care Net's chief outreach officer), visit www.care-net.org/podcast.



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Engaging a Pro-Choice Person: Why It's Important to Find Common Ground

Engaging a pro-choice person in a discussion about abortion is very difficult. Regardless of whether the person is a family member, friend, or work colleague, these conversations too often end up as shouting matches that reflect more heat than light. Considering this challenge, I am reminded of Jesus's advice to his disciples when he sent them out in pairs to proclaim the gospel to a hostile world. He told them that if folks didn't want to listen to the truth, move on and shake the dust from their feet (Matthew 10:14). In the face of an argument about abortion, it's tempting to implement this approach too quickly. We must learn to endure some discomfort in order to share truth.

To properly discern who to engage in discussion, think about the abortion debate as a normal distribution curve. On the tail ends, you have folks who are solid in their pro-choice and pro-life convictions. However, most people are somewhere on the hump. I refer to these people as potentially "pro-choice lite." Accordingly, I believe they can be reached by the power of the Holy Spirit with a thoughtful and winsome approach.

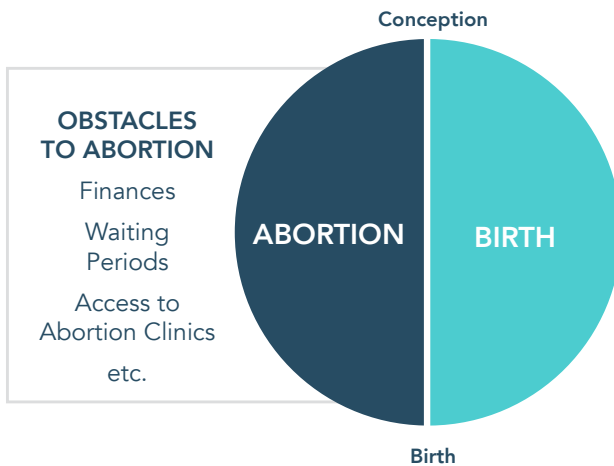
Several years ago, a Care Net ministry partner invited a friend to join a meeting with me because he thought he would be interested in the ministry. After he gave a brief introduction to Care Net's work and me, the guy looked at me and said in a very stern tone, "So you don't think a woman should have control of her own body, do you?" Alas, it was clear this man was not on the same side of the abortion debate as my ministry partner and me.

The usual pro-life response would be that we are not talking about the

woman’s body, but rather another separate and distinct human life in the woman’s body. However, by God’s leading, rather than responding with that answer, I responded with a question seeking to better understand his position before I tried to get him to understand mine. I said, “It sounds like you are pro-choice, right?” He said, “Yes!” Not only was he pro-choice, but his business did work for Planned Parenthood and his daughter had worked there!

I said to him, “OK, so the two choices are birth and abortion, and you don’t care which decision a woman makes, as long as she has the right to make it, right?” He nodded in agreement. Then I asked if there were any obstacles from conception until birth to stop the woman from having an abortion, would he want to remove those obstacles and he said, “Yes!” Then, I tore a piece of paper out of my notebook and drew a circle with a line that divided the circle in half. On the left side of the line, I wrote the word “abortion” and on the right side I wrote the word “birth.” I put the letter C at the top of line for conception and put a B at the bottom of the line for birth. (See Diagram A)

DIAGRAM A

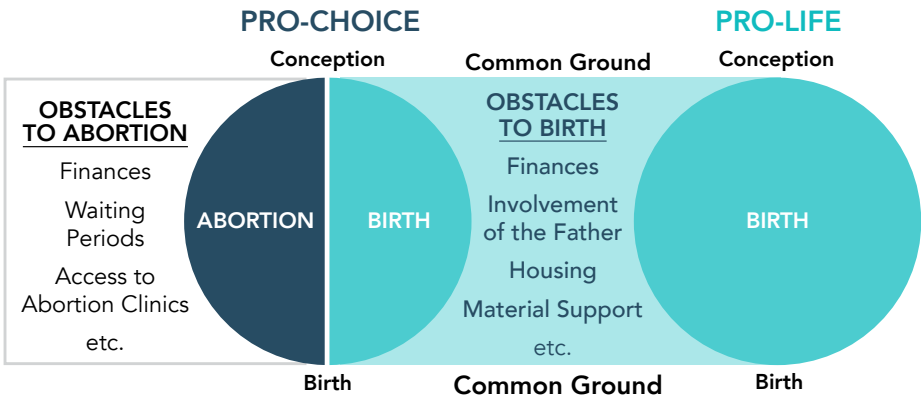


Outside the abortion side of the circle, I wrote obstacles a woman could face to having an abortion, like finances, waiting periods, access to facilities, etc. Then I said, “You want to remove all these obstacles and others,” and he

said, “Absolutely!” Then, I wrote the word obstacles on the side of the circle next to the word birth and said, “Now, of course, you want to work just as hard to remove the obstacles to birth as well...correct?” (You see, to be *truly* pro-choice, you must be just as committed to removing obstacles to birth as you are to removing obstacles to abortion.) He paused for a moment, and then said, “Well, yes.” So, I began to list obstacles connected to the missing support needed by a woman at risk for abortion.

Next, I drew a second circle and put the word birth in the middle of it and put a C at the top and the B at the bottom like I did with the other circle. I wrote obstacles next to it and listed the same ones that I did next to the birth side of his circle. (See Diagram B) Then, I told him this represented my pro-life position. I too wanted to support women from conception to birth who wanted to have their babies but are facing obstacles. I told him that is what Care Net’s affiliated pregnancy centers do—find ways to remove these obstacles to birth to support a woman’s birth choice.

DIAGRAM B



I paused for a moment, like the detective Columbo used to do, and said, “Looks like we have common ground.” I then drew a circle to connect my circle to the birth part of his pro-choice circle.

When you’re trying to find common ground with someone, it helps to follow a few ground rules. For example, if you’re going out to dinner with a vegan, don’t take them to a steak house. You wouldn’t say, “Here’s a

compromise: you have just a little bit of steak.” No, the common ground between the omnivore and the vegan is at the salad bar. The salad bar is figuratively the birth side of the equation.

Often you will hear pro-choice people challenge pro-life people with the obligation to care for children that result from a life-affirming decision. Their position is that supporting these children is a specific obligation only for pro-lifers. But if they are truly pro-choice, they have just as much of an obligation to support these children, because these little ones are the result of a woman’s choice. Although pro-life people have no obligation to remove the obstacles to birth, pro-choice people have the obligation to remove the obstacles to birth, from conception to birth, and to support the result of a woman’s life-affirming choice—her child.

In any case, he agreed there was common ground between our positions. I spent the remainder of our time together explaining what pregnancy centers do and encouraged him to visit one. Most pro-choice people don’t have outlets to enlighten the birth side of their worldview, and pregnancy centers give them that ability. I am keenly aware that as a pro-choice person begins to “taste and see” women in difficult circumstances empowered to choose life, it will grow the birth side of their circle. During my conversation, what clearly could have devolved into an argument became a conversation where seeds of life were planted in this man’s heart and mind. In fact, the last thing he did as we left the meeting was give me his business card.

The reason I call those who support abortion pro-choice rather than pro-abortion is to help them see they do have a life aspect to their worldview. Granted, there are some like Margaret Sanger who are truly pro-abortion because they believe in controlling woman’s choice based on factors such as her race and economic situation. But most pro-choice people don’t think this way. So, when we call them pro-abortion, it often misrepresents their position, and we miss an important opportunity to engage them.

Transformation in thinking rarely occurs without conversation. Every person who was once pro-choice and became pro-life had a revelation. Something triggered the birth side of their pro-choice circle

to grow so much that the abortion side was eclipsed. I know this sounds counterintuitive, but the first step in getting a pro-choice person to become pro-life is to help them understand the life-affirming obligation embedded in their pro-choice position.

Here's another way to think about this. My wife Yvette is an avid gardener, and often she plants ground cover next to a stone pathway. I've noticed that with some watering, the ground cover grows and covers the stone pathway. But the pathway never overtakes the ground cover, despite it getting water too. Why? Because the ground cover is alive, and the stone pathway is dead. God sets before everyone life and death (Deuteronomy 30:19). The birth side of a pro-choice person's worldview is alive and the abortion aspect is dead. Like my gardener wife Yvette, our calling is to apply the living water of the Holy Spirit to a pro-choice person's worldview so it can grow. Amen!

Compassion Pairing™:

How to Answer Those Who Believe Abortion is a Compassionate Choice

Remember Mary Elizabeth Williams from chapter three, the woman who wrote the article titled, “So What if Abortion Ends a Life?”¹ If we’re honest, Mary Elizabeth Williams isn’t doing anything out of the ordinary. Instead, she’s determining who deserves the most compassion. This paradigm isn’t new; follow me on an uncomfortable journey to see how this compassion paradigm has frequently been used throughout history.

Let’s take Mary Elizabeth’s statement, “I would put the life of a mother over the life of a fetus every single time,” but let’s replace those words “mother” and “fetus” to realize how we’ve seen this play out before. First, let’s replace those words with “Nazi” and “Jew.” I doubt anyone in 1940s Germany questioned that the Jewish people were fully alive and human. Yet the Nazis believed that Jewish lives were worth sacrificing for the sake of their own world-conquering goals.

How about replacing those words with “slave owner” and “slave.” It then reads, “I would put the life of a slave owner over the life of a slave, every single time, even if I still need to acknowledge my conviction that a slave is indeed a life. It is a life worth sacrificing.” Whoa. I hope you see my point. In China, they used the terms “baby boy” and “baby girl” in their quest for a male-dominated society. It’s not uncommon to see the able-bodied valued more than the disabled or the elderly. The worldview reflected in William’s statement is the same worldview held by everyone who has committed some of the most heinous acts and cruelest violence in the history of mankind.

We can no longer effectively champion the pro-life cause by solely

trying to prove that a fetus is a life. There's a bigger, more powerful worldview at play.

Compassion Pairings™

The worldview Mary Elizabeth Williams likely doesn't recognize she holds makes a statement about how the powerful will interact with and treat the vulnerable. We dress this stuff up with law and language. We disguise the truth with words like "solution," as in "final solution," and "choice," and mantras like the Clintons touted in the 1994 election about abortion being "safe, legal, and rare." But when you undress the language and show the naked truth, it's the language of death to those who cannot protect themselves.

This is why we object to abortion with such passion. We understand this, don't we? Moreover, we serve the Lamb. What did we learn from his compelling example? We learned exactly how the powerful are supposed to interact with and treat the vulnerable. We know from Philippians 2 that Christ clothed himself in humanity. When he died on the cross with his arms open wide, he demonstrated a powerful point. The powerful must not sacrifice the vulnerable for themselves. They must sacrifice themselves for the vulnerable.

Three words are critical to Care Net's work and ultimately the pro abundant life message. These words are: power, vulnerability, and compassion. First, let's unpack the concept of power. Power is an ability to act in a particular way or the capability to direct yourself or someone else. When people have power, they can direct themselves and influence or control others.

Vulnerability is the flip side of power. It's the lack of an ability to do something or act in a particular way. It's the lack of capacity to influence someone else. Vulnerable people are more susceptible to those who are powerful. There's an interplay between power and vulnerability. Other than God, no one is all powerful. Likewise, no one is all vulnerable. Depending on the situation, you may be more powerful or more vulnerable. There's a fluidity between the two concepts.

Now let's talk about compassion. Compassion is a notion of sympathetic concern or care for someone else. It denotes a focus on others that leads to righteousness and justice. That's a big part of what we do at Care Net—we are purveyors of compassion in our work.

Let's look at the interplay between these three concepts: power, vulnerability, and compassion. The question is, who do we have the most compassion for, the powerful or the vulnerable? Most of us tend to be more compassionate for the vulnerable. We like to root for the underdog. It's almost like a definition of humanity.

Herein lies a conundrum. Compassion is a commodity that must be apportioned. All day long, we make decisions about how to allocate compassion. You hear about it in decisions about government health care, housing, homelessness, and more. Many conversations revolve around compassion. How do we apportion it? And what's the framework to use when trying to apportion compassion?

I came up with a simple way to better understand this paradigm. I call it Compassion Pairing™ (CP), and it's a way to help us understand the powerful role of compassion in the abortion debate. Imagine you're watching a nature documentary. The scene shows a lovely gazelle grazing in the field and a hungry, ferocious lion. In this pairing, it's easy to see which animal is powerful and which is vulnerable. The lion will easily overpower the vulnerable gazelle. So where does our compassion land? Watch the nature show with a group of people and someone will surely cry out, "Awww! No!" as the gazelle becomes the lion's lunch. Our compassion often follows the vulnerable.

Earlier we touched on another example. The Jews in concentration camps and the Nazis who put them there. Who's more powerful? Who's more vulnerable? It's pretty clear to see. Or what about comparing two different women. One is drinking a bottle of Evian, the other's drinking dirty stream water. Who is the more powerful? Who is the more vulnerable?

We could go through these pairings all day. Compare the bodybuilder to a baby. Picture an elderly woman versus a twenty-something jogging the trail. In so many situations we can imagine, it's easy to distinguish the powerful from the vulnerable. Though we may be impressed by the

powerful, our compassion usually follows the vulnerable.

Let's specifically consider the CP framework in the context of abortion. To start, imagine you are in a restaurant with a friend who is eight months pregnant, and she orders alcohol. Do you have a problem? Yes. Why? Because your mind automatically did a quick CP analysis that identified the more powerful (the woman) and the more vulnerable (her unborn baby). You quickly apportioned more of your compassion toward the vulnerable baby. And here's the thing: a pro-choice person would very likely agree with you and have a problem with your friend drinking alcohol.

So how does the pro-choice person end up with a divergent viewpoint when a woman gets on the surgical table for an abortion or takes the abortion pill? It's good to remember Scripture says our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against Satan's forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:11–20). In short, the evil one skillfully uses several techniques to short-circuit the CP framework that God wired into humanity.

COMPASSION PAIRING™

How Do You Apportion Compassion?

Who is the Most Vulnerable?

Who is the More Powerful?



Young Man



Pregnant Woman



Born Baby



Elderly Couple



Unborn Baby

First, he tempts us to dehumanize one of the pair. This is exactly what happened with abortion when the baby in the womb was considered just a blob of cells. In fact, this is what happened with the Jews in the Holocaust and Black people during slavery. When the vulnerable are dehumanized, injustice is frequently a result.

Second, Satan tempts us to use a different CP and apply it to another situation. For example, you often hear pro-choice politicians make statements like, “I support a woman’s right to choose, and I don’t think a bunch of men should be controlling her choice.” In this case, the CP is between men and women, and since women are generally viewed as more vulnerable than men, they get more compassion. They are using the woman/man CP and applying it to the abortion decision.

Finally, Satan tempts us to focus on the situation rather than the people in the situation, generally through story or narrative. For example, some try to focus on the situation and say the baby is more powerful than the woman because the baby can change her life. However, abortion is framed as a woman’s empowerment issue (*My Body, My Choice!*). Clearly the one who can end another’s life is more powerful than the one who can change another’s life. Getting drawn into the emotions of the narrative makes it very easy to lose sight of the facts of the situation. In the case of abortion, a vulnerable human life is being sacrificed for the powerful—a framework that compassionate people consistently reject as unjust.

Given the horror of abortion, it might be easy to think those on the pro-choice side have no compassion. But generally, that is not true. Pro-choice people are mis-apportioning compassion in a way that they don’t in other situations. Therefore, a great way to engage them is to model your approach after the apostle Paul in his efforts to reach the Athenians, who worshipped an unknown God (Acts 17:22–34). Paul used the common ground of worship and skillfully introduced the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some mocked him. However, others said they wanted to hear about Jesus again, and some joined him and believed.

In the case of abortion, the common ground with pro-choice people can be compassion. Imagine if you started the conversation with a pro-choice person with, “I know that you are a compassionate person,” and then give examples of CP scenarios: Who’s the more powerful? Who’s the more vulnerable? How do you apportion compassion? This allows you to find some common ground. Then, like Paul, you can show them they are apportioning compassion in abortion differently than they do in every other situation, and then encourage them to join you. A truly compassionate

person, regardless of the circumstances, does not sacrifice the vulnerable for the powerful.

The CP model is so central to the human condition that God used it to facilitate our redemption through Jesus Christ. Specifically, God used power, vulnerability, and compassion to bring Jesus into the world. Jesus emptied himself of his power and increased his vulnerability by clothing himself the flesh of humanity (Philippians 2). He came into the world as a vulnerable baby, and he left the world with his arms wide open, beaten, bloody, and exposed—vulnerable. In our humanity, we cannot help but be drawn to him and have compassion for him.

What to Say to Someone Who is Pro-life Except in Cases of Rape

*I am not the “rapist’s child.” I was her child. I am God’s child.
I’m one of thousands, every year, given the opportunity to live,
love, and redeem what the rapist tried to destroy. Our stories are
full of hope, full of love, full of purpose.*

— Ryan Bomberger

One of the most difficult questions to address in the abortion debate is the situation of rape. Pro-life author and speaker Ryan Bomberger, who was conceived in rape and placed for adoption, notes it’s the scenario that is used often to justify making abortion available in all situations.

Abortion in cases of rape actually account for about 1 percent of abortions.¹ While statistically accurate, that figure is no comfort for the woman who was raped. She is a victim deserving of the utmost compassion. I have a wife, sisters, daughters-in-law, nieces, granddaughters, and countless other women I love dearly, and the thought of them being violated in this way is difficult for me to even contemplate. I understand the desire to “make things right” by having an exception in this case. But the circumstances of a baby’s conception and birth must not determine its value and worth. That’s why we no longer call children who are born out of wedlock illegitimate or bastards. Ryan Bomberger is a committed husband and father of four children who is doing lifesaving work in this world. Is his existence less worthy because of how he was conceived? I think not.

Yet it’s been tricky for the pro-life movement to articulate this viewpoint in a way that doesn’t sound narrow-minded or, candidly, just cruel. Using the Compassion Pairing™ (CP) concept I mentioned in framework three, you can better understand why some pro-life and pro-choice people make

this exception, and how to respond persuasively to make the case for the life of the baby in the womb as result of rape.

My thoughts about the CP framework as it relates to instances of rape were challenged by a conversation with a young Christian college student who liked to debate tough issues like abortion. I asked her to tell me her understanding of the pro-choice position, and she responded that “they don’t believe it’s a life,” along with a few other key arguments. Then I asked about the pro-life arguments.

“We believe that life begins at conception.”

“OK, but what do you say to people who are pro-life, except in cases of rape?”

“I would say to them that life begins at conception.”

“Yes—they agree with you that life begins at conception. Then what would you say?”

“Well...I’d just keep telling them that.”

The more I thought more about her response, the clearer it became that we need better answers. I wondered how someone can be pro-life, except in cases of rape—what is going on in that person’s head? I determined that it has to do with power, vulnerability, and compassion. It’s about how they configure CP in this situation.

Remember, the CP paradigm is about how we apportion compassion. It’s the human condition that naturally occurs, almost without thinking about it. For example, let’s once again pair the woman and the baby to assign power, vulnerability, and compassion. Who’s the more powerful? Obviously, the woman. Who’s the more vulnerable? Again, clearly the baby. I’m not saying the woman has no vulnerability. And I’m also not saying the baby has no power. It’s fluid. The baby has some power and the woman has some vulnerability.

In the scenario of rape, however, someone changes the CP. Those who support abortion in cases of rape no longer compare the baby to the woman to make the decision. They compare the woman to her rapist. In this matchup, they understandably assign more power to the rapist and more vulnerability to the woman. Therefore, they have more compassion for her.

This situation is similar to the one I discussed in framework 3, where

pro-choice people use the CP of men/women to support abortion. In this case, people are using the rapist/woman CP to support the abortion of the baby. But in reality, that's not really what's going on in the undeniably difficult case of rape. If conception occurs because of rape, the woman should move into the CP where she is matched to the baby. The rapist then moves into a new CP, where it's the rapist versus the justice system.

Between the rapist and the justice system, who's more powerful? Who's more vulnerable? Where's our compassion? I know it almost breaks your brain. Based on our justice system, our compassion is for the rapist because constitutionally he's "innocent until proven guilty." That's justice. It's a form of compassion. It's our legal system. It's a reflection of compassion.

Compassion pairing™ happens in lots of situations. Let's compare the people with disabilities and those without disabilities. Who's the more powerful? Those without disability. Who's the more vulnerable? Those with disability. How do you apportion compassion? Toward the people living with a disability.

The only way to change this scenario is to introduce a backstory—the key factor that can decrease power and increase vulnerability. Have you ever watched a movie and halfway through you realize you're cheering for the bad guy? You're like, "Oh, he's just killed twelve people. Please let him get away!"

How does that happen? The character is clearly rotten, but then there's a flashback. It shows the character being abused as a small boy. And suddenly, your compassion is with the villain. You understand him better. Your heart goes out to him. Isn't this also what happens before sentencing a criminal? A good lawyer gives the backstory. They play with power, vulnerability, and compassion. It's a truism of life. It happens everywhere.

Now let's look at the pro-choice position and use the same argument. You have the woman; you have the baby. The pro-choice logic is that the baby is more powerful and the woman is more vulnerable, so she should have our compassion.

Let's say I'm a lion on the Serengeti and I'm trying to decide what's for lunch. I've got an adult gazelle, and I've got a baby gazelle. I do a power, vulnerability, and compassion assessment. Who's the more powerful? The adult gazelle, of course. Who's the more vulnerable? The baby gazelle. So,

who do I attack? I go for the easier prey. I choose the baby gazelle. So, in this case, my compassion is apportioned to the adult gazelle. I let the adult go free and have the baby for lunch.

Have you ever watched a Disney movie that tries to make an animal seem human? The storytellers use power, vulnerability, and compassion to humanize the animal characters. This works because in real life, the difference between animals and people is that animals prey on the vulnerable and people protect the vulnerable. What defines humanity is how we interact with power, vulnerability, and compassion. This is why people who are for abortion often don't want to talk about it—because it's a violation of our humanity.

But Babies Do Change Everything

Some on the pro-choice side may say that my assessment here is wrong. They do believe the baby is more powerful than the woman because the baby has the power to change her life—to change everything. There's even a baby products commercial that says it: “Babies change everything.”

To their position, I pose a scenario. Let's say you're in a restaurant with an adjacent bar. You see a woman sitting at the bar who is smoking and drinking. Is there a problem with that? Of course not. No one is going to stop her if she's of legal age. But let me add to our scenario. The woman at the bar is obviously pregnant, due any day now. Does that change anything? Of course it does. We'd all be concerned because she's going to hurt her baby. We would wonder how she didn't know this was wrong. The brave among us would be glad to tap her on the shoulder and let her know the damage she was causing.

When we assess the pregnant woman drinking and smoking, we quickly apportion the power, vulnerability, and compassion paradigm of the situation. We don't even think about it. It just happens.

How do you think someone who's pro-choice would react to the woman in the bar versus a woman who is pregnant as a result of rape? Would they consider how the vulnerable baby in the bar becomes suddenly more powerful in the abortion room?

The variable is the backstory—the situation. But changing the situation doesn't change the reality. The essence of humanity does not change situationally. The fact that I'm a person or not a person doesn't change based on my situation.

A false compassion pairing™ muddied the abortion debate. They pitted women against men and then encouraged evaluation. Who's more powerful? Who's more vulnerable? This became the core of their argument. If you've ever heard a politician say something like, "I think a woman should have the right to choose, and I don't think a bunch of men here in Washington should be making that decision." They're using a CP to defend their opinion. This is the feminist narrative. It's men versus women. But therein lies our opportunity.

When I talk to people who say these things, I'm quick to explain that I know why they believe what they believe. Whenever you see the powerful taking advantage of the vulnerable, your compassion is ignited. Then I explain that this is exactly why I'm pro-life. We have a consistent narrative they don't see.

The False Compassion Pairing™

Our power, vulnerability, and compassion framework disappears once we're no longer comparing two people. If the compassion pairing™ is between a human and a thing, the human will win the compassion every time. Pro-choice advocates maintain the false CP that makes abortion seem like the most compassionate option. They say, "This issue is not about a woman and a baby. It's about a woman and a question mark. A thing."

If we want something to be protected, we humanize it. Think about how animal rights proponents use power, vulnerability, and compassion. Television commercials portray a poor, cold, hungry, animal with its mangy mess of hair and a sad look on its face, with moody Sarah McLachlan music playing in the background. It's designed to make you feel compassion for that animal and anger toward any human who mistreated it.

Let's consider a CP that compares the rapist to the baby. Where's the

power? Where's the vulnerability? Who dies in this worldview? Do you see what happened? If we stand for abortion in cases of rape, then it's the baby who dies in this matchup. This worldview actually holds more compassion for the rapist.

Here's something else that's interesting to think about. Why don't we allow women who have been raped to sit on their attacker's jury? We would say the woman who was raped is too close to the situation. She can't choose what happens to the rapist. That wouldn't be justice.

Now think of that same woman carrying a child because of rape. Which is she closest to, the rapist or the baby? We know that if you're too close to the situation, it's difficult for you to be just—that's why that decision wasn't left to us. That's why that situation was left for God.

What is it about rape that we find so abhorrent? It's because someone used their power against someone more vulnerable. You see, the same reason we have such disdain for rape is the same reason we must reject abortion. Interestingly, when I have heard the compelling stories of compassionate and courageous women who were raped and yet gave birth, they are rejecting abortion for this reason. Specifically, they refuse to let the rapist extend his power through them to the little one in their womb by having an abortion. Indeed, they are motivated by a CP between their baby and the rapist in which they have the most compassion for the most vulnerable. When they bring their baby into the world, they are modeling the same sacrificial love Jesus exhibited on the cross. In the midst of their pain, these courageous women have the moral clarity to see the vulnerable ones who need their sacrifice. And that is why their children call their birth mothers blessed.

How to Respond When Told That Men Should Have No Say in the Abortion Decision

If you've been around the abortion debate for any period of time, you've probably heard someone say that men's opinions, thoughts, and actions about abortion don't matter. The position—typically held by pro-choice people—argues that since a man does not have a womb to carry an unborn child, he should have no moral, legal, or ethical say in what happens to an unborn child. They have framed abortion as a woman's issue through the “my body, my choice” mantra, and they just want men to stay out of it. Care Net hears this challenge to men so often we've coined it the “no womb, no say” perspective.

Some years ago, the pro-choice movement started an aggressive initiative encouraging men to support abortion rights. This effort challenged men to be “Bro-choice,” and even took pledges to show their support. In fact, in 2015 the Men4Choice initiative was started.¹ Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity (URGE), another major proponent of the Bro-choice movement, states on its website, “Pro-choice men can be a powerful force in helping move our policy agenda forward, which is exactly why URGE leads the way in recruiting and elevating their voices within this movement.”²

Most recently, Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff, husband of Vice President Kamala Harris, convened a panel discussion that focused on the role men can play in championing more access to abortion rights. The panel was co-hosted by Men4Choice. Moreover, *The Wall Street Journal* recently printed a glowing story about recruitment efforts targeting men to support a woman's bodily autonomy.³ Oddly, the publication was nowhere to be found when Care Net hosted two first of their kind and well-attended

Called and Missioned pro-life men's conferences.

After reading these perspectives, I was reminded of the old quip, "When I want your opinion, I will give it to you." It also reminded me of a pro-choice bumper sticker that says, "I don't want my reproductive rights decided by a bunch of gray-haired white guys." Of course, this bumper sticker misses the irony that abortion was made legal by just such a group—the Supreme Court in 1973. If old white guys can't get it right now, isn't it possible they got it wrong then? In any case, for Bro-choice advocates it's perfectly fine for men to engage in the abortion debate, as long as they come down on the right side.

That hypocrisy aside, let's take a closer look at the "no womb, no say" perspective and see if it holds up to scrutiny. First let's start with the obvious: men are one-half of the biological equation when it comes to creating a pregnancy, so to argue they have nothing of value to say about the fate of that pregnancy is a logical stretch.

Second, the principle underlying the "no womb, no say" view is that unless one is impacted by an issue in the most direct way, one should have no agency in making decisions about that issue. So, let's consider a few situations. Should a woman who is a stay-at-home mom and makes no income outside the home have a say on tax policy? After all, she doesn't directly pay taxes for an income. Should someone who does not own a gun have a say in our nation's gun laws? A non-gun owner is not going to be directly impacted if access to guns is limited.

When you consider the "no womb, no say" perspective in light of our nation's history, it's especially troubling. Consider the Civil War. The South was primarily an agrarian society structured around and dependent on slave labor. Indeed, a key aspect of the Southern states' rights argument was that since the North's society and economic system would not have been directly impacted by the abolition of slavery, the North should have no say. Indeed, "no slaves, no say," was the South's proverbial battle cry.

Consider the issue of voting rights in the United States. From our nation's founding, voting rights were limited to property-owning or tax-paying white males who made up about 6 percent of the population. So the notion was, "no property, no say."

Even when voting rights were extended to other men, women were still excluded. Why? Because many men believed women should not be directly involved in the economic and civil aspects of American society. Consequently, these men held a “womb, no say” perspective when it came to voting rights. The Women’s Suffrage Movement rightly changed that perspective, and with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, women were given the right to vote...by men. All these examples prove we have rightly rejected the principle that undergirds the “no womb, no say” perspective on abortion.

When considering what is best for our society, we don’t consider only the view of those directly impacted to the exclusion of all others. To do so would be an injustice, especially to those who are vulnerable. Rather, we give an equal say and even encourage the voices of those who are affected, even if it’s only indirectly.

Indeed, a stay-at-home mom is affected by tax policy, so she has an equal right and is encouraged to vote. Our nation’s gun laws affect the safety of the communities where the non-gun owners live and raise their children, so they must have an equal say in the enacted laws. The moral stain and injustice of slavery affected those in the North, so they had agency and an obligation to fight a bloody war to eliminate it. The laws passed in this nation affected women’s rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, so it was an injustice to deny them the right to vote.

In all these issues, our society determined it would be an injustice to deny certain people the right to have a say in issues that affect them, even if indirectly. Men are directly impacted by pregnancies they create. Several recent studies have confirmed the reality that abortion does affect men. One study found five different ways in which men were affected by abortion, such as expressing a need for counseling and experiencing ambivalent and painful emotions after abortion. When an unborn child is killed in the womb it deeply affects a man, especially if it is his child. So doesn’t it make sense for him to have a say too?