

# Men's Research Study

## Addendum to the Medical Professionals Guide

### Helping Men Regain a Voice for Life

While the pro-abortion lobby believes abortion is solely a woman's issue, we know from previous studies that men play a significant role in women's pregnancy decisions. The numbers back this up. A 2015 Care Net Lifeway survey<sup>1</sup> of 1,038 women asked who the most influential person was in their abortion/pregnancy decision: 38% said the man, followed by a medical professional (26%) and the mother (14%). Statistics like this confirm what we already knew to be true—the father of the baby plays a major role in the woman's decision to choose or reject abortion.

As part of Vitae Foundation's 2025 study *A Few Good Men: Increasing the Masculine Presence* interviews were conducted with three different groups of men: those who experienced an unexpected pregnancy and strongly leaned one way (to choose life or have an abortion), men who experienced an unexpected pregnancy and said "I'll support you whatever you choose," and men who had no direct experience with an unexpected pregnancy or abortion.

### Ready or Not?

This study identifies three prominent responses to an unexpected pregnancy: fear, shock and excitement/happiness.

These emotions are primarily tied to how men perceive the impact of the pregnancy on their lives. News of the pregnancy confronts men with a variety of issues, such as their relationship with their girlfriend/wife, their



---

3 [www.lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Care-Net-Final-Presentation-Report-Revised.pdf](http://www.lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Care-Net-Final-Presentation-Report-Revised.pdf)



desire to have a baby and their readiness/ability to start a family. Many men do not feel adequately ready or confident to take on the responsibilities of caring for a child. Reasons men gave for not feeling ready include immaturity, selfishness, age, financial insecurity, life-stage, relationship health, partner readiness, lifestyle convenience and the opportunity costs of having a child. For these reasons, many men decide to advocate or agree to have an abortion.

Many men facing unexpected pregnancies are in low-trust, low-commitment relationships. They don't see a future with the woman and as a result, don't want to have a child with her. They see the child as an extension of a commitment they do not want to make. In contrast, men in relationships characterized by high trust and strong commitment are more likely to be excited about the pregnancy and/or willing to overcome the obstacles to starting a family with their girlfriend/wife.

Men talk about the reality that the unexpected pregnancy (and therefore the possibility of fatherhood or abortion) is the risk they took when engaging in a sexual relationship with a woman. They perceive their decision to engage in sexual activity (especially if it involved "unprotected" sex) as the mistake. The unexpected pregnancy (and resulting fatherhood or abortion) is simply the natural result. This stands in stark contrast to findings in previous studies related to women, who perceive the unexpected pregnancy, not the sexual activity, as the mistake. Shame and trauma associated with the "death of self" and the pregnancy can then push women toward abortion to "fix" or hide what they see as a mistake.

## The Pregnancy Conversation

Most men feel that abortion is primarily a woman's choice and it is not their "right" to make the final decision. They perceive that the woman is the one carrying the burden of the pregnancy and therefore, *she* has the right to determine what to do with the preborn life. Most men perceive abortion as a decision where they have minimal say or no say at all, though many men believe they *can* and *should* have *some* influence on her decision.

Most men feel that in the face of an unexpected pregnancy, both the man and the woman should be involved in the conversation about what to do. They express a desire to support their pregnant girlfriend or

wife, but as noted before, many do not connect this desire with a decision in favor of the preborn life.

What happens during the conversation is important. When approached with news about an unexpected pregnancy, many men who desire to support their girlfriend/wife perceive that “I’ll support you whatever you choose” is most supportive thing to say. They believe it respects her autonomy, is non-confrontational and in some cases, communicates an indirect openness to abortion (even if they recognize that the burden of the decision-making then falls on the woman). Some men disagree with this approach, believing it places an unfair burden on the woman. They feel that communicating their preference for or against choosing life is either a more honest way of approaching the conversation, a more effective way of convincing the woman toward their preference and/or a better way of supporting the woman in the decision-making process.



## The Impact of Fatherhood

Men perceive fatherhood as a meaningful role. Their experience with father figures influences how they perceive their own roles as fathers. Fathers are seen as men who should be providers/protectors for their children, supportive/loving of their wife/girlfriend, one who offers safety and presence, teaches valuable skills, etc. Men with children express a variety of emotions related to fatherhood including pride, joy, happiness, a sense of purpose and a sense of duty. Men with no father in their life had negative feelings about his absence and viewed absent father figures with anger and disappointment. Men with absent/no father figure at all express a desire to parent their children opposite to the model they were given.



## Empowering Men for Life: Recommendations for Priests and Deacons

The findings from this study point to several things that priests and deacons can do to help men be the leaders, providers, protectors and fathers that God calls them to be. **All men, but especially younger unmarried men, can be prepared and taught that fatherhood brings joy, fulfillment, challenge, sacrifice, pride and purpose, things that men in this study readily acknowledge. Of course, in the Church, these discussions will be centered around God's plan for fatherhood within Holy Matrimony. John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* can be a powerful aid in presenting this material to young men in youth ministry, young adult ministry and marriage preparation. Again, this is more than just what *not to do* (fornication) but a fuller description of what a healthy relationship looks like. It means helping him understand the value of things like sacrifice, communication, love, perseverance, long-suffering and self-control. This is especially true in the face of hardship, difficulties, brokenness and sin.** If models of healthy relationships are presented and discussed widely it will help young parishioners fashion faith-filled, joyful lives and can help prevent unexpected pregnancy and abortion.

However, if an unexpected pregnancy does occur, it is vital men be given the support and counseling needed to help their girlfriend or wife choose life. In the face of an unexpected pregnancy men experience a wide array of emotions, the intensity of which may lead them to disengage and isolate from other people. Priests, deacons and the laity can reach men in this scary situation with messages of safety, hope, purpose and specific, practical offers to help. They can connect men (and their girlfriend or wife) to pregnancy centers, free pregnancy-related services from local/regional/state programs, or even to people or groups within the parish who can provide financial help, job access, housing opportunities and a wealth of baby-related support.

Men often see the decision to have sex as a mistake or sin and can interpret messages about the morality of abortion as a sign of judgment from clergy and/or laity. Through implementing these approaches, parishes can be places defined by hope and help, where men (and women) feel supported, not shamed, when facing an unexpected pregnancy.

## The Call to Responsibility

Messages should help men see how having a baby is a pathway to becoming the man God is calling them to be. Men need to see how the process of becoming a father is part of their God-given purpose and is worth overcoming the emotional/material obstacles that would prevent them from choosing life.



Most men acknowledge that it is their responsibility to support their pregnant wife or girlfriend but struggle to reconcile this knowledge with a decision for life. Messages from priests and deacons about responsibility should take into consideration that while most men know they should be responsible; they struggle with what this means (abortion or something else?). Messaging should frame the man's role in the pregnancy as a responsibility that is part of their God-given role as a provider and protector. Help men understand that despite the challenges ahead, the preborn child is a blessing given by God.

Similarly, messaging on fatherhood should emphasize how accepting this blessing to be a father offers both meaning and purpose. Demonstrate the joy and beauty of fatherhood, especially considering God's attributes as a Father. Highlight how the absence of good fathers affects children and contributes to trauma, hardship and difficulty. Discussions on fatherhood should not gloss over its hardships but frame them in light of how these difficulties are ultimately rewarding, good and purposeful. Communicate messages that allow men facing unexpected pregnancies to see themselves as fathers.

## Help Him Be the Man He is Called to Be

When discussing an unexpected pregnancy, pastoral counseling should aim to understand the man's self-perceived readiness and to identify gaps that can be addressed. Men need to feel empowered to have and support a child. Ask questions about his specific anxieties and walk him through what it would look like to confidently and practically address these concerns.

Identify dynamics/issues that cause misunderstanding, mistrust, ambiguity

and/or discord with his pregnant wife or girlfriend. Counseling should focus on strengthening/repairing the health of the relationship. Help the man overcome emotional or spiritual obstacles that might arise which prevent him from wanting to support her through the pregnancy. Help him see that laying down his life for his girlfriend or wife and his child is an opportunity to become more like Christ. This study demonstrates that most men desire to support their girlfriend/wife in the face of an unexpected pregnancy. Show him how loving his girlfriend/wife in this moment is part of what it means to love her like Christ loves the Church (Ephesians 5:25).

## The Central Role of Communication

We know that the conversation about the pregnancy plays a significant role in whether a woman will carry to term. An honest, clear and authentic conversation between the man and the woman will leave her feeling supported, loved and confident about carrying the pregnancy to term. However, many men do not feel prepared or able to approach this conversation—and since they are often influenced by cultural scripts which tell men things like “her body, her choice” and “no uterus, no opinion,” saying something like “I will support you no matter what you choose” often seems like a safe option. But previous studies reveal that this response can make the woman feel isolated and alone—it places the weight of the decision on her. Priests, deacons and the laity should seek to challenge the pro-abortion narrative (that alienates men and women from each other) with a message that promotes communication, interdependence, male and female complementarity and unity.

## Help Him “Step Up”

**Help men realize how an unexpected pregnancy can be the launch-pad to self-actualization. An unexpected pregnancy presents a pivotal moment for men to consider their relationship status, their desire for children and their readiness/ability to have a baby. Help men see how having a baby offers an (unexpected) opportunity for the responsibility they inherently desire. It is a pathway to:**





full maturity, a more responsible and fulfilled self, a heart full of love for others, a more confident version of the self, a better boyfriend/husband, being the man who God calls him to be, the man his girlfriend/wife wants him to be, the man his “future” child needs him to be. Men need to see how overcoming emotional/material obstacles that prevent them from choosing life is worth it to become something new/better. Men can be challenged and encouraged to “step up” and to welcome this new responsibility as the way to become the best version of himself.

Guide men in understanding that despite the physical burden of the pregnancy falling on the woman, it’s their *privilege* to help in ways that alleviate that burden. Most men believe their input doesn’t matter at all (“not my body, not my choice”). They nonetheless understand that it’s their responsibility to support their pregnant girlfriend/wife and even desire to support her but struggle to reconcile this knowledge with a decision for life. This translates into varied perceptions of their responsibility/duty during the pregnancy. Help men see that providing true support to their wives/girlfriends and embracing the life of the preborn baby is part of this privilege. What they thought was their biggest mistake can become their biggest blessing.

**Work to reprogram the man’s common response to his wife/girlfriend facing an unexpected pregnancy from “I’ll support you, whatever you choose” to other, truly supportive statements like: “I don’t know what this looks like but I will help you be the best mother you can be and I will be the best father I can be,” “I will help, provide, love you (if this is something she wants) and/or our child,” “I am putting your wellbeing and our child’s wellbeing before my own” (help him see that by giving up certain bad habits—or even good things—for her sake, he is removing the impediments she sees in him in terms of helping her care for the child), “I am responsible” (describing how and demonstrating it in practical ways), “We have a good support system” (family).**

### **In-Person Ministry: The Power of Presence**

Engagement with men, whether it be individual counseling, small group discipleship, or larger men’s ministries/groups, should ideally be held in person. In the *A Few Good Men* study, men frequently described how face-to-

face interactions felt more genuine than experiences with people online. It is much more likely that men will communicate and exchange important truths, ideas and even challenges in-person, man-to-man. As Sacred Scripture says, "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). We know that being present communicates care, authentic concern, a sense of closeness and stability. By modeling this approach and these values in how men's programs operate, parishes can encourage men to practice these same values in their relationships.

To read the rest of *Pro-Woman Approach for Medical Professionals: Applying Vitae Foundation Research to Healthcare*, visit [vitaeresearchinstitute.org/research/guidebooks/](http://vitaeresearchinstitute.org/research/guidebooks/)



**We facilitate lifesaving research and apply the findings to  
create messaging strategies to share  
with others so together, we can  
build a future where abortion is unthinkable.**

National Office | 1731 Southridge Drive, Suite D  
Jefferson City, MO 65109 | 573.634.4316  
[info@vitaefoundation.org](mailto:info@vitaefoundation.org) | [vitaefoundation.org](http://vitaefoundation.org)

Models are used for illustrative purposes only. Visit Vitae's website for charitable solicitation registration information. © Vitae Foundation 2026

All Rights Reserved