

(physically and emotionally), who are responsible (toward family, duties), who support others and who have strong character (trustworthy, respected, moral, discerning, skilled). Churches who sponsor men's programs should consider finding men who display these attributes—men whose integrity will carry weight when talking and giving counsel on topics such as responsibility, readiness, relationship health and faith. Mentors/leaders who have gone through an unexpected pregnancy themselves can also be effective in reaching other men who are facing similar circumstances.

To read the rest of
*Pro-Woman Policy Guide: Applying
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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.

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Men's Research Study

Addendum to Pro-Woman Approach for Pastors

Reaching Men for Life

While the pro-abortion lobby believes abortion is primarily a woman's issue, we know from our engagement with pregnancy centers that men play a significant role in pregnancy decision-making. The father of the baby has a major role to play in the woman's decision to choose or reject abortion. And it makes sense. The driving forces behind abortion involve isolation, shame and a lack of support. How many of those issues could be resolved if the father of the baby was present and motivated to empower her to choose life?

We believe the church has a significant role to play in empowering and building up men of integrity.

Ready for Responsibility?

As part of Vitae Foundation's 2025 study titled *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.



The study identified 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 desire to have a baby, their self-identity and their readiness/ability to have a baby. The pregnancy



situation, whether intended or not, becomes a serious moment of reflection on what they want the present and the future to look like. This oftentimes leads to an inner dialogue about what needs to be done. For some, it means getting an abortion. For others, it means preparing for the responsibilities of being a father—“growing up.” Most men, however, acknowledge that pregnancy presents new obligations that require a response.

Perceived readiness significantly affects a man’s desire to choose life. 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, however, don’t perceive these obstacles as insurmountable and instead believe they present an opportunity to take responsibility.

Relationship health plays a significant role in perceived readiness. Unhealthy relationship dynamics are a large reason why many men either:

- 1) don’t know how to support their pregnant girlfriend/wife
- 2) don’t want to support her
- 3) don’t feel ready for the responsibility of having a baby
- 4) feel unable to have a conversation about the pregnancy/feel like they have no say
- 5) and in some cases, desire 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 start a family with their girlfriend/wife.

While most men acknowledge the humanity of the preborn child, the baby is rarely the deciding factor. Men’s attention is mainly tied to the emotional dynamics evoked by the unexpected pregnancy. Their view of the pregnancy

healthy relationship looks like, and that means more than sexual boundaries. It means seeing things like sacrifice, communication, love, perseverance, long-suffering and self-control modeled out. The church should promote and discuss what healthy relationships look like in the face of hardship, difficulties, brokenness and sin. Your church’s witness will not only help prevent unexpected pregnancies but also men navigating them as well.

Challenge the Cultural Scripts that Hurt Him

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. Churches should seek to challenge the pro-abortion narrative (that alienates men and women from each other) with a message that promotes interdependence and emphasizes the sacrificial ethic of the Gospel.

Ministries for men should be held in person – emphasize presence.

Engagement with men, whether it be individual discipleship, small groups, or men’s ministries, 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, which makes sense: most men highly valued emotional and physical presence. As 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. If your church hopes to instill these same values in how men approach their relationships with their girlfriends/wives, it should reflect these values in how the program operates.

Ministries and counseling should be led by men who reflect the ideal masculine model. Men look up to other men who are present with those they care about

(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. Many of these men expressed a belief that they could influence her decision.

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 of their girlfriend/wife, 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 lack of presence 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.

Men see the ideal male role model as someone who is present, responsible and of good character. They gave diverse responses as to what is the ideal masculine role model, but the most common response overwhelming shapes him as someone who is present (physically and emotionally), responsible (toward family, duties) and of good character (trustworthy, respected, moral, discerning, guided by faith). Many also see the ideal male role model as someone who protects/offers safety, teaches life skills and supports others.

Meeting the Moment: Recommendations for Pastors

Church as a Place of Safety and Hope

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. Churches who desire to reach men in these circumstances must position themselves as a place that offers safety, hope and purpose. In messages about abortion and the sanctity of life, pastors should emphasize the forgiveness of Christ as a defining theme—men often see the decision to have unprotected

sex as a “mistake” and might interpret messages about the morality of abortion as a sign of judgment from “church-people”. How the church engages men in unexpected pregnancy situations should be defined by the forgiveness found in the Gospel and the hope that it brings for new life. Aim to be a community that will make men feel embraced, not shamed, when facing what they see as the “consequence” of their sin. Men should know that they are not defined by their mistakes and that their shame can die at the foot of the cross.



Address His Identity as a Man

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 girlfriend/wife but struggle to reconcile this knowledge with a decision for life. Messages from the pulpit 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 *privilege* 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. Supporting her choice for life is something he should *want* to do.

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 in light of 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

In a culture that devalues and confuses men, churches have an incredible opportunity to empower men facing an unexpected pregnancy to meet the moment.

Churches should be aware of the emotional landscape men inhabit in the face of an unexpected pregnancy. Because readiness is often a complex and multi-faceted emotional state, churches should intentionally develop ministries and relationship opportunities to reach men who might feel misunderstood or unsupported.

Pastoral counseling should aim to understand man's self-perceived readiness 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 address these concerns, especially in light of what the Gospel says about his identity as a man.

Identify dynamics/issues that cause misunderstanding, mistrust, ambiguity and/or discord with his pregnant girlfriend/wife. Counseling should focus on strengthening/repairing the health of the relationship with his significant other. Help the man overcome emotional or spiritual obstacles that might arise which prevent him from wanting to support her through the pregnancy. Encourage him to view the strength of his relationship as an opportunity to grow in Christlikeness. Most men communicate a desire to support their girlfriend/wife in the face of an unexpected pregnancy. Show him how loving his significant other is part of what it means to love her like Christ loves the Church (Ephesians 5:25). Offer to connect him with accessible support systems that can help both himself and her, whether they can be found through your church, a local parachurch ministry, or online. If your church is partnered with a local pregnancy center, encourage him to schedule an appointment with his girlfriend/wife.

Model and Promote Healthy Relationships

Relationship health significantly influences whether a man desires to support his pregnant girlfriend/wife. The church should not underestimate the impact it can have on this dynamic. Christians can model and promote what healthy relationships look like. However, sometimes messaging on relationships is reduced to simply sharing a Christian sexual ethic on what *not to do*, such as saving sex for marriage. While the sanctity of marriage is an important part of the conversation, it is not the entire conversation. Men need to see what a

fluctuates between perceiving the preborn child as a burden or a blessing. Men who consider the unexpected pregnancy a “mistake” or feel incapable of being a father are more likely to view the baby as a burden. Men who welcome the emerging obligations of fatherhood, on the other hand, see the baby as a blessing. Many fall in between these two poles. Some who accept fatherhood expressed more concern over the responsibilities of being a father than excitement over the emerging life.

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) was the mistake. The unexpected pregnancy (and resulting fatherhood or abortion) is simply the natural result. They say things like: “Decisions have consequences.”

Key: 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 or no say, 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 the most supportive thing to say. They believe it respects her autonomy, is non-confrontational and in some cases, communicates an indirect openness to abortion

