



**3**

*steps*

## **FOR STRONG CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS**

We are so excited you want to build stronger relationships with local churches! From what we've seen the past decade, we believe God will use these partnerships to allow His people to more fully represent His heart for both the woman and the child.

For each step, we share an insight we've discovered through relationships and research. And then we provide questions you can ask any church staff member you are meeting with. We are praying for you!

# STEP 1

Understand that pastors probably feel even more tension than you do about how to navigate the political landscape around abortion.

Many pastors are wrestling with the complexity of abortion. Most believe that it's never God's answer for either a woman or a child. At the same time, they are hesitant to promote political positions to their congregation. In churches we have surveyed, 90% of congregants say abortion is an important issue their church should be addressing. But many pastors see the topic as bringing up too many complicated issues, such as:

- **Unintentionally causing pain or communicating judgment to women who have had abortions**
- **Being seen as taking political sides, when they have some tensions with both political platforms on this issue**
- **Not sure how to communicate God's heart for both the woman and child**

For these, and many other reasons, many pastors have stopped talking about abortion in their churches. You can be a safe person for them to start talking to about their thoughts, concerns and questions on how to address abortion. But that will start with you asking questions, not giving advice. Keep an open mind, listen well, and don't offer solutions right away. You are building a relationship.

## Questions to ask:

- Do you experience tension when you think about bringing up the issue of abortion at your church? What does that tension stem from?
- How do you perceive our organization? Do you see us as connected with a political platform? What could we do to foster dialogue around this issue that is rooted in the teachings of Jesus, not politics?

## STEP 2

Give pastors hope that there is a safe way to talk about unplanned pregnancy and abortion in their church.

Up until now, Christians haven't had language to talk about our approach to abortion that isn't also associated with a political platform. When we use language that is rooted in politics, we unintentionally alienate many people in our congregation and community.

But when we follow the example of Jesus and use language and stories that people can understand and relate to, we can see God begin to do a new work.

### Questions to ask:

- Would your staff and congregation want to have a conversation about abortion? If it was not tied to politics and was safe?
- Our organization is beginning a journey to replace political language with the language of Jesus in the Gospels. Would you be interested in going on this journey with us?
- How could you see our organization partnering with you in this journey?

*"[In the past, **I have been**] angry at the church, I felt like they were passive, I couldn't understand why they would not help... then I started asking questions, listening. **I went from anger to understanding** why they didn't want to be involved and then to why God is giving me some influence here and I ran with that, that's been good."*

*- ProGrace Pregnancy Center Leader*



**Prograce**

For ProGrace resources to share with churches,  
visit [www.ProGrace.org/churches](http://www.ProGrace.org/churches)

## STEP 3

Let pastors know that your organization wants to help them care for their own community, not just ask them for volunteers and donations.

Any pastor you meet with most likely has relationships with several other nonprofit Christian organizations in your community. And those leaders are looking for volunteers and supporters from the congregation. This can start to feel like a one-way relationship to many pastors.

We know you need volunteers and donors, and we believe God will provide them. We encourage you to look at your relationship with churches as a mutual partnership. If you have a posture of wanting to bless the church and help them fulfill their mission of caring for their congregation and reaching out into the community, your pastor friends will notice this and be more willing to talk with you.

Pray for God to give you His perspective on the nature of your relationship with churches. How you can help them minister to their congregations, and how the church can be a support system to your clients. Then you will be prepared to have a conversation your pastor friends probably aren't expecting!

### Questions to ask:

- A recent LifeWay study\* found that 40% of women who had abortions were church-goers at the time – but only 7% of them talked to anyone at their church before making this decision. How does this statistic resonate with you? Do women facing unplanned pregnancy approach you or your team for help and support?
- Studies also show that 20-25% of all women will have an abortion by age 40. Would you want to create an environment to encourage those women (and men) in your church feel the freedom to open up and talk about their abortion experience? How do you think we could work together to accomplish that?
- The women we serve would be so blessed by a connection to a local church. Would you like to talk more about how we could work together to create a pathway of connection?

*\*<https://lifewayresearch.com/2015/11/23/women-distrust-church-on-abortion/>*