



Background Information for Sermons, Talks and Other Events

An important note about “pre-abortion” issues

The walls that prevent post-abortion healing are often reinforced by deceptive information about why many abortions take place. Pivotal new evidence about “pre-abortion” issues is often lost amidst harsh political rhetoric, hurtful stereotypes or misleading media spin about “choice.”

To share the truth and soften hearts regarding abortion and post-abortion issues, people have to first unlearn what they think they “know” about “pre-abortion” issues.

Surprising new evidence indicates that most (not all, not some, but most) abortions are unwanted or coerced – an assault on the rights and lives of both the unborn and women. Many – even in free nations such as America – are forced. (Learn more at www.theunchoice.com/coerced.htm.)

Unwanted abortions and coercion in its many direct and indirect, often synergistic and escalating forms, can break the strongest of individuals or families, especially those already vulnerable or seeking help from agenda- or profit-driven gatekeepers. This new evidence about “pre-abortion” risks and injustices is an important preface to information about “post-abortion” risks and heartbreak. We can then encourage those in need of help – before or after abortion – to find compassion, help, hope and healing in our church.

The Prelude to Abortion – “Pre-Abortion” Issues

Important context on the backdrop of unwanted, coerced or forced abortions, pregnancy-related violence or homicide, and other injustices that often precede abortion. Coercion may include pressure from trusted experts, authorities, gatekeepers and guides or agenda- or profit-driven health care and social service providers.

New evidence indicates that – contrary to conventional wisdom – most abortions are unwanted or coerced, and even forced. Coercion comes in many forms and often from all sides. It may involve agenda-driven medical advisors or others in the helping professions who offer deceptive counsel or join in the pressure already being put on the woman or girl to abort. It may involve her partner, parents, family members, friends, employer, school authorities or others in positions of authority pressuring or even exerting force or violence to get her to abort.

The coercion and deceptive or negligent counsel may come from profit-driven abortion providers

who market free or low-cost health care services for women. In many (not all) cases, this is in direct opposition to her clearly expressed wishes and in violation of her own personal conscience.*

There are many other subtle and synergistic forms and levels of coercion that often work in concert with other types of pressure that can be intense and can escalate. Women have been fired, evicted, left homeless, threatened or even killed for resisting abortion. Coercion can escalate to violence or even homicide, the leading killer of pregnant women.

Coercion comes in many forms and often from all sides

As you can see from the statistics below, most women are already under pressure when they seek the counsel or help of other individuals or professionals. These guides may direct, pressure or refer her for an abortion. In some cases, clinics advertise free healthcare services, such as pregnancy tests, only to aggressively pressure, sell or misrepresent abortion to women who may already be under duress.

In some particularly heartbreaking cases, women are literally forced by those in authority or power, from schools to parents to abusive partners or even sexual molesters or those who exploit women for profit. (One abortion clinic security guard testified that men routinely stood outside clinics to make sure women didn't cancel their appointment.) Groups such as the Center Against Forced Abortion (CAFA) routinely assist young women who are being forced to abort against their will.

The synergy of coercion

People often believe that most abortions are freely and fairly chosen or fully and fairly informed, but these statistics paint a different picture. They underscore the fact the coercion rarely comes from a single source but rather deceptive shell games, abuse of power, or assembly-line medicine:

- 64% of women having abortions said they felt pressured to abort.¹
- 84% said they were not fully informed.¹
- 52% felt rushed and 54% uncertain beforehand¹, yet
- 67% received no counseling beforehand¹, and
- 79% were not informed about alternatives.¹
- Most suffer trauma symptoms¹ and face a significantly higher risk of injury or death after abortion.²
- Coercion can escalate to violence.³
- Homicide is the leading killer of pregnant women.⁴

These numbers – backed by the stories of many who've been there – do not reflect a free, fair or fully informed “choice,” nor even a just society. In some cases, direct or indirect forced is applied or the result of escalating coercion. This represents a pervasive human rights abuse, not a just substitute for the full disclosure, authentic support, meaningful alternatives and other essentials that women need and deserve. Nevertheless, the grief, heartbreak, guilt or even shame experienced by those personally affected and grieving the loss of a child, is real. Some families also grieve two deaths. Maternal deaths range from violence and homicide to post-abortion deaths.

Furthermore, those who would pressure or even force teens and women into unwanted abortions can be deterred by knowing that:

- Risk of death for women is 62% higher after abortion.⁵
- 31% suffer health complications after abortion.¹
- 65% suffer symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).¹
- 60% said “part of me died.”¹
- Teens are 6 times more likely to commit suicide if they’ve had an abortion in the last 6 months.⁶
- Clinical depression risk is 65% higher after abortion.⁷
- Suicide rates are 6 times higher after abortion.⁸

Coercion touches women, men and families in our midst

Many pregnancy-related abuses are often part of one or another woman’s abortion story. Men can be victims of coercive counseling, too, whether from meddling parents of a boyfriend, school or other authorities; deceptive experts who present false data; hard-sell or deceptive sales tactics from profit-driven abortion providers; or professionally negligent and agenda-driven social-services counselors, gatekeepers and guides.

In some cases, clerics and trusted family pastors have even directed a family or individual toward abortion as “the right thing to do” or “the only choice.” Sometimes negligence stops counselors from telling counseled individuals or couples that help and resources are in fact available.

Medical coercion is also common and can exploit a couple already under pressure with disinformation, negligent counseling or pressure to abort. (See [Two Senseless Deaths.](#))

In still other cases, men or family members may be involved in the decision or left out of the decision altogether and still share feelings of regret, guilt, loss or shame.

Circumstances vary widely, but feelings of regret, guilt, shame and grief over the loss of a child are, as expected, common. Some may still be literally traumatized. One study found that 65% suffer symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. For some, the risk of clinical depression, psychological disorders, despair or even suicide is significant.

Warning parents of teens at risk of coercion and post-abortion trauma or suicide

This “prelude” information about risks is especially urgent for parents and teens or those who may have been teens at the time of an abortion. Parents must be advised that their children are at risk of coercion, which can happen quickly and without their consent, and post-abortion issues that can escalate quickly with serious, even deadly consequences.

A unifying opportunity to educate the flock and open the door to healing and restoration

Clearly, there is much education, healing and restoration to be done. Our society’s and our church community’s heightened understanding about unwanted abortions and other “pre-abortion” and “post-abortion” issues will help. An informed, compassionate, nonjudgmental culture will go a long way toward easing the pain of so many among us. This includes families who have lost not only an unborn child, but also – directly or indirectly – a daughter, sister, wife or friend. This may be from pregnancy-related abuses or violence or post-abortion injury and emotional and physical trauma or death from all causes, including but not limited to suicide.

A challenge to practical, proactive and personal ministries and support for pregnancy and parenting-related issues

The sheer pervasiveness of abortion's impact on our church and culture may also challenge all of us to better meet the needs of pregnant women and families facing challenges or crises. Much of this suffering goes on behind closed doors, as does the heartbreak that may follow a recent or distant abortion, regardless of circumstances. The presumption and judgment of those facing an unexpected or challenging pregnancy can inadvertently apply pressure on those dealing with such issues.

Since the rates of coercion are significant and post-abortion trauma or even suicide rates are significantly higher among those who abort versus giving birth, this should also be considered an urgent and compassionate outreach.

Helpful resources to use in addressing this issue

Following are some helpful resources that provide more information on these issues. These and other resources, testimonies and information can be found www.theunchoice.com.

Portraits of Coercion flyer

What Every American Needs to Know flyer

Forced Abortion in America flyer or fact sheet versions

Forced Abortion in America Special Report – anecdotes, news reports and facts to use in homilies

Counseling & Resources fact sheet, lists resources for those being coerced or in need of pregnancy- or post-abortion help, including teens, women, men and families

Books

The Jericho Plan

Forbidden Grief

Giving Sorrow Words

Mom, Dad, I'm Pregnant

Appropriate Scripture Verses

“She refuses to be consoled because her children are no more. The Lord says: ‘Cease your cries of mourning. Wipe the tears from your eyes. The sorrow you have shown shall have its reward. There is hope for your future.’” —Jeremiah 31: 16-17

“The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
—Psalm 34:18

“They cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. ... He guided them to their desired haven.”
—Psalm 107: 28-30

“He will rescue the poor when they cry to him;
He will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them.
He feels pity for the weak and the needy,
and he will rescue them.

He will redeem them from oppression and violence,
for their lives are precious to him.” —Psalm 72:12-14

“But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men this is impossible, but all things are possible with God.’” —Matthew 19:26

“I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.” —Isaiah 57:15

“‘For I know well the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord, ‘plans for your welfare, not for woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. When you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you,’ says the Lord.” —Jeremiah 29:11-14

Citations

1. Rue VM, Coleman PK, Rue JJ, Reardon DC. Induced abortion and traumatic stress: A preliminary comparison of American and Russian women. *Medical Science Monitor*, 2004 10(10): SR5-16. See also www.theunchoice.com/coerced.htm.
2. For a list of studies, see Priscilla Coleman, “A Tidal Wave of Published Data: More Than 30 Studies in Last Five Show Negative Impact of Abortion on Women” at <http://afterabortion.org/?p=4814>.
3. See *Forced Abortion in America*: www.theunchoice.com/pdf/FactSheets/ForcedAbortions.pdf.
4. I.L. Horton and D. Cheng, “Enhanced Surveillance for Pregnancy-Associated Mortality-Maryland, 1993-1998,” *JAMA* 285(11): 1455-1459 (2001); see also J. Mcfarlane et. al., "Abuse During Pregnancy and Femicide: Urgent Implications for Women's Health," *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 100: 27-36 (2002). See also www.theunchoice.com/coerced.htm.
5. Gissler M., et. al., “Pregnancy Associated Deaths in Finland 1987-1994 -- definition problems and benefits of record linkage,” *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica* 76:651-657 (1997); and DC Reardon et. al., “Deaths Associated With Pregnancy Outcome: A Record Linkage Study of Low Income Women,” *Southern Medical Journal* 95(8):834-41, Aug. 2002.
6. Garfinkel et al., “Stress, Depression and Suicide: A Study of Adolescents in Minnesota,” *Responding to High Risk Youth* (U. of Minnesota: Minnesota Extension Service, 1986)
7. JR Cougle, DC Reardon & PK Coleman, “Depression Associated With Abortion and Childbirth: A Long-Term Analysis of the NLSY Cohort,” *Medical Science Monitor* 9(4):CR105-112, 2003.
8. Gissler, Hemminki & Lonnqvist, "Suicides after pregnancy in Finland, 1987-94: register linkage study," *British Journal of Medicine* 313:1431-4, 1996, and M. Gissler, “Injury deaths, suicides and homicides associated with pregnancy, Finland 1987-2000,” *European J. Public Health* 15(5):459-63, 2005. See also DC Reardon et. al., “Deaths Associated With Pregnancy Outcome: A Record Linkage Study of Low Income Women,” *Southern Medical Journal* 95(8):834-41, Aug. 2002.