

Champions for the Unborn with Lauren McAfee and Nick Vujicic

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Lauren>> The research that we've seen has shown that the abortion rate of women that are sitting in the pews is nearly the same as women that are outside of the church, and so when we think about abortion as the church, we're not talking about something that's "out there" and outside of our churches. We're talking about real people in our pews, day in and day out, both women, who are post-abortive, as well as men, who are post-abortive, from a woman that they were connected with in the past, who are feeling the effects of an abortion.

[Champions for the Brokenhearted: The Unborn][Image of broken heart with Isaiah 61:1 in the center]

Nick Vujicic>> Hello, and welcome back to Champions for the Brokenhearted here at Life Without Limbs, the Nick Vujicic Ministries.

I love you. God bless you. I don't know where you are in this world right now, but I'm going to tell you I love you, and we all know worldwide what happened here in America in 2022 after 50 years, we are now in a "post-Roe" society here in civilization of America talking about right-to-life, understanding that every unborn child has value.

God has a plan for each and every one of these children, and we as a church are actually--there are some that are stepping up to the plate with "Stand for Life." I'll talk about "Stand for Life" in a second, an organization of a collective, aligned impact alliance for life, crossing boundaries of denominations and all sorts of ministries, that together we do "move the needle" in America in the conversation of life, not just about coming around and surrounding women and families with unexpected pregnancies, but also supplying a ton of education, awareness, equipping, and resources for the churches.

Look, you and I know that there's a there's a 97% chance that your pastor said nothing about Roe v. Wade being overturned. There's a chance that they wanted to, but they don't even know how to, so "Stand for Life" is an incredible, robust, incredible, blueprint strategy for America to "move the needle" [advance] to come alongside the church to also engage within the community,

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moving the needle, having the conversation, and really bringing in Gen Z on board, as well, as we make some real big changes, and telling the church, "If not now, when?"

Joining me in the studio here is Lauren Green McAfee, founder of "Stand for Life." Lawrence College education included a PhD in ethics and public policy education, on also a specialty emphasis on women's reproductive health. She is an incredible "general in the army of God," a friend of mine. I am so proud to call her friend, and her family in this epic, epic battle. I'm so glad to call her friend. Lauren Green McAfee, "Hello!"

Lauren>> It's great to be here, Nick.

Nick>> Good to be here. We are now actually in DC.

Lauren>> That's right.

Nick>> We're having a conference with an incredible reverse engineering, "get-to-know-everyone-around-the-table," that came here who said, "Let's have the conversation about "Stand for Life," whether you're representing a denomination or an organization, whether you know much or a little about the conversation of the prolife movement, and coming around this whole topic from an approach of the holistic, loving on the families affected with unexpected pregnancies, learn. Share with us right now, "Stand for Life" it's vision, it's objective, and what are we doing here in DC.

Lauren>> Absolutely. Yeah, you're right. So, "Stand for Life" wants to see organizations come together, whether they're from prolife organizations, church leaders, pastors, and even just lay leaders that are in the church coming together, so that we can connect with one another and be stronger together as we go about our work to stand for life, and so in our work, we're actually trying to build relationships with one another and then create educational opportunities so that we might be educated on the realities on the ground for women facing unplanned pregnancies, provide educational tools that churches can use to equip their people, and then mobilize the

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church to be engaged so that we can see all people being shown the human dignity that they're deserving, and so we care about standing for life because we care about people.

We care about children in the womb, and we care about the woman carrying that child, and the family involved, and wrapping around that unplanned pregnancy, and so the church has historically done a great job of being engaged, if you think about the church historically, whether it was in the Second Century when it was Christians who were taking children out of the trash heaps, who had been discarded, and they were raising them as their own, or you think even about in our own country today, there are thousands of Pregnancy Resource Centers that exist to serve women who are facing an unplanned pregnancy, and to love on them, and to care for them well.

Those are nearly exclusively founded and run by people of the Christian faith and the Catholic and evangelical circles, and the church is three times more likely to be engaged in adoption and foster care than the general public in America, and so the church has historically been very involved in caring for human dignity issues, and so at "Stand for Life" we're just seeking to say, "Yes, we need to continue doing that, and we need to do even more. How can we accelerate that?" So how can we equip the church, educate the church, and then mobilize the church to be serving women, caring for women in our communities who are facing unplanned pregnancy so that every child in the womb will be seen for the dignity and value that they are deserved, and every woman and family will feel that as well.

Nick>> Lauren, you and I know that there are many people with the false perception that there's been some progression in our country in regards to this life issue, obviously, with now a post-Roe scene. Tell us how that's actually quite false. And what is the truth right now?

Lauren>> Yeah, so you're right that there's--I think, there's a lot of confusion right now about the life conversation in a post-Roe

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world. So, for years and years now, the prolife movement has just kind of thought, "You know, if we can overturn Roe, that's the finish line," but really that's not the end of our work. It was an amazing accomplishment, and we should celebrate the victory of the Dobbs' decision which overturned Roe, which meant that now abortion is no longer a federally accessible law in America, and that there can be abortion restrictions, but many states are now (some) implementing laws that are outlawing abortion in states, but then others are even loosening it, and gaining more access, and so we still live in a country with access to abortion, and abortion centers, but even beyond the access that is available for surgical abortions, we've also seen a rise in chemical abortions or abortions from the pill, the abortion pill, and loosening restrictions happened on the abortion pill during COVID, and that has also continued now in a post-Roe world that women now have more access than ever, in some ways, to abortion if they're having their abortion through abortion pill. So, we know well over a majority of the abortions in America, if not over 60 to 70 percent of abortions today, are happening through the abortion pill, and those can be mailed across state lines, and so really abortion is still accessible in nearly all states in America today.

So, that means new challenges for the prolife movement. It means there's still a lot of work to be done. It means that we can celebrate the Dobbs' decision, overturning Roe, but it means we're not done yet. There's still a lot of work and a lot of work to be done helping women see that they do have options other than abortion--that they do have many resources available to them-- people that want to wrap around them and care for them so that they don't have to make that decision to end the life of their child in the womb. And so, I I do want to encourage our churches to, yes, while we do celebrate, also be motivated that we've got to keep going. We've got to keep doing more work and helping our culture understand the human dignity of all life and then also particularly applying that to the life in the womb and how we engage with women facing unplanned pregnancies.

Nick>> Yeah, look I just want to say a message real quick to the churches while you're watching. Listen very carefully. It ain't about if your state right now is allowing abortions or not. In 24 months, mark our words right here, right now, you're going to have women at your church pews

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coming in and telling the senior executive team of the pastoral team of the church saying, "I came home. I didn't know that my teenage daughter was pregnant. She took these pills. She had a chemical abortion in her own home. I came home, and there was blood on the floor everywhere, and I had to take her to the ICU. What do we do? How can we help?" I just want you to know that when we say there's a lot more to come down the road, there's a lot more, and the other perception that I want also for churches to understand here, Lauren, is there is so much more.

I know that qualitatively, categorically, we've talked about education and awareness and resources. Help us understand what those education, awareness, and resources are that actually are available, even for some churches that are watching that say, "Oh, yeah! No, we're we're prolife. No, we don't talk about it on the stage. No, we don't take up an offering at the local pregnancy health clinic or the crisis pregnancy clinic." But there are some people like, "Well, we do that already, so yeah, we're prolife. Help us understand that there's so much more than that, if they are doing something, and then help us bring some qualitative layering and context as to what "Stand for Life" is, the website, and all these things that you provide to any local church that wants to actually engage in this conversation.

Lauren>> There are so many ways that people can engage, and so you mentioned some. Churches can and should be involved in their local pregnancy center, and I hope that they are, because there are Pregnancy Resource Centers all over the country. I think one of the things that we're hoping to see churches do more of is help their congregation for congregants to help lead studies with one another to understand the theological foundations for WHY we care about human dignity.

So, the church should care about this because it's something we read in the Bible, and we care about what the Bible says, and we should live our lives based on what scripture teaches. So in Genesis 1 we know that God created all human life in His image, so man and woman, created in God's image, and so that's an incredible thing. That has a lot of implications, but certainly one of those implications is that we have inherent dignity and value. Every person does, regardless of any qualifying factors about them. If it's a human life it has dignity and value, and should be

treated with respect because of that. So, how can and we, as a church, understand that well, and apply that in how we engage with every person that we come in contact with, including life in the womb? And for people to have a question about if that should be applied to life in the womb, I think we have a lot--well, we have science on our side, saying,

"Hey, if you, even in a survey of over a thousand biologists from all over the world, in from different backgrounds, and different beliefs about life and about choice, they all-- the majority of them--agreed that life begins at conception. From a scientific biological fact, life begins at conception so if we believe that life begins at conception then we have to apply that human dignity value that we get from Genesis 1 to the life in the womb so it motivates not only that we care about the life, but it also motivates HOW we care, in that we want to be holistic about the way that we're engaging in this topic. So, we know that there is a woman when she's facing an unplanned pregnancy, she's being affected by this situation in her life that it was unplanned and now she's having to figure out,

"How am I going to make this work?" And many times, women can be in really challenging circumstances. My husband and I have been in the adoption process pursuing a domestic infant adoption here in the United States, and we've had open adoptions and some placements of children in our home that ended up going back to their parents, and so as we've been in that process, we've had the chance to walk alongside these women, and walk alongside them in their circumstances and in their life and care for them and care for their children for some period of time and it's been very eye-opening just to that proximity.

I think when you have the proximity to individuals who are really walking that road of the hardship of an unplanned pregnancy, it can give you more empathy and understanding for the challenges, and so some of the women that we've had in our lives were truly coming from some of the most challenging circumstances you could imagine, when facing their unplanned pregnancy.

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And so, we just, you know, we got to see the church step in and care for them and love them and wrap around care for them of, you know, discipling them, helping them meet tangible needs that they had. Just let them know that, "Hey, we're here and we care about you. We care about your child. We want to be here. You can do this and we'll be with you in it." And that's a beautiful thing. And so, I think, as our church has that theological understanding of why we care, and how we should go about caring, then we can be a powerful force to be engaging in the life issue, and it'll help us as we engage with our pregnancy centers, and it'll help us as we start discipleship groups for single moms, and start a group with an organization called "Embrace Grace."

They have groups all over the country that are in churches that connect with moms facing unplanned pregnancies and say, "Hey, we want to wrap around you. We'll throw you a baby shower. We'll we'll disciple you for in in this season." And so there are lots of opportunities, and so I encourage churches to consider what's in their community to, I mean, "What's the Pregnancy Center there? What's the opportunities that you have there, the prolife organizations? But then also, national organizations they can connect with. I think there's a lot of opportunities, and "Stand for Life" has created a curriculum that is is giving a six-week Bible study to help with that foundational piece that I started with, of "How can we have a good theological rootedness in our understanding about human dignity so that we can then go from there into doing the work?"

And so, our curriculum is a six-week Bible study called "Created in the Image of God," and that's available, and also has video vignettes that were recorded that people can watch, and also sermon outlines if pastors are wanting to think through, "Hey how can I talk about this in my church and encourage my congregation?" So, I'm so grateful that we live in a time where there's access to so many great resources, and it's easier than ever to connect with great resources, and so I pray that that's what our churches would do.

Nick>> Look, this is so important. I want you to go to the website standforlife.com and check out the "Created in the Image of God" curriculum. Check out all the resources. I'm going to tell you right now I don't know another team that is honestly engaged, but thought leaders and actively getting research and development with so many organizations and churches nationwide

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with multiple think tanks, reverse engineering. What specifically in this community, and your church, and in this city is it that "Stand for Life" can help equip, resource, and let's engage in a unified, collective manner of standing for life.

I want to ask you, because I want everyone to understand this. Look, Lauren, so many people say, "We can't talk about life, can't talk about prolife. It's a little political." I want to get to that a little bit later, but tell us how-- because I know the story--because it goes hand in hand with this. Hobby Lobby, the Supreme Court that all beginning within your parents' lives. Was it 2014, nearly 10 years ago?

Lauren>> That's right. Yeah, so in 2014, my family ended up at the Supreme Court in the Hobby Lobby case which was about a life issue. Our family's business, Hobby Lobby, found that because of the HHS mandate, we were being told that our company had to provide and pay for abortifacient drugs and devices as part of our insurance plan, and that went against our deeply held convictions about life and protecting life in the womb.

And so, we ended up all the way at the Supreme Court, and it was through that journey, that I, as a young person—I was in my 20s at that time—as our family walked to the Supreme Court, just was amazed to hear from prolife organizations who were reaching out to our family and saying they were praying with us and they were grateful for the stand. And I was inspired just by all of the organizations that I got to know that were in the prolife space that were doing the real work on the ground, in and out every day.

And through that experience of seeing the prolife movement at a national level for the first time, was what inspired me to want to be engaged in the life work myself, both in pursuing a PhD. It was focused on ethics and public policy and and wanting to serve women in both being thoughtful and providing theological and academic work in that space, as well as being really engaged in my own personal life and working in that space. And so that's what first motivated me to want to start what became "Stand for Life" and bring people together. I think having the opportunity to hear from so many organizations, I kept thinking like, "Oh, have you ever met this

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one, and have you guys met that person," and so often people didn't know each other, and so that was kind of what led to me bringing these groups together and saying, "Hey how can we be better together?"

How can we have relations with one another that are in this space, collaborate on projects, be more effective, in kind of linking arms as we go forward?" And that's how "Stand for Life" began.

Nick>> Amen, and I love the approach where it's coming around the family that's affected with unexpected pregnancies, and helping the church to actually be the church, the hands and feet. There are so many pastors out there who probably want to say something, but they don't know how. So praise God for "Stand for Life!" I'm really excited because, I mean, just that example in 2014 people get, "Well it's a political issue." No, it's a life issue, and when you're a Christian, you value all life, the born and the unborn. The perception that it doesn't happen in the church--we're coming close to the end of the interview, but I do want to have you say in a synopsis or a summary, at this point, someone's watching. They're like, "Is it really that, you know, is it really that prevalent? Could it really be someone sitting next to me in my church? That's just everyone outside the church." Tell us what you have found.

Lauren>> Yeah, so the research that we've seen has shown that the abortion rate of women that are sitting in the pews is nearly the same as women that are outside of the church, and so when we think about abortion as the church, we're not talking about something that's "out there" and outside of our churches, we're talking about real people in our pews, day in and day out, both women who are post-abortive as well as men who are post-abortive from a woman that they were connected with in the past, who are feeling the effects of an abortion, and I encourage pastors that they, yes, we should talk about this, but to do so knowing that these are real people and do so with truth and with grace and compassion and thankfully, because of the Gospel and what we know from scripture, we have the gift of forgiveness for any sin, so whether that's an abortion or any of the other sins that all of us are sinners, and there's forgiveness, and there is grace and there is redemption in that. And so thankfully that is offered to everyone those in our pews because

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everyone in our views is a sinner. And so as pastors we get to share that good news while also encouraging us to have that value for life.

And so, yes, you're absolutely right. It is in our churches, and so I know that that might be surprising. Some people might like to think of it as not affecting our congregants and the people that are in our community, but it does, and so we have to be engaged on this issue, thoughtful about how we talk about it in a way that cares for those that are facing the trauma and the shame in their own lives of being post-abortive, pointing to truth and pointing to their hope. And so that's the the beauty of the Gospel is that we have that opportunity as believers to point to hope even amidst trauma and pain from our past.

Nick>> Amen. Last comment to anyone watching standforlife.com, but give them a last word of encouragement to get into it.

Lauren>> Yeah, I would encourage people to be engaged in the life space. Maybe you already are, and that's wonderful, but know why we believe what we believe and then get out in your communities, get out in your church, and care well for those that are vulnerable and needing helpj and I love organizations that are standing for that like your organization, and let's keep doing that together as the church, showing the world the beauty of what we know as the "Imago Deo" which gives us all human dignity and standing for life.

Nick>> Amen. Lauren Green McAfee, thank you.

Lauren>> Thanks for having me.

Nick>> You're a Champion for the Brokenhearted. I love you all very much. It is understanding that every life has value. God has a plan for each and every one of us. He has more precious thoughts of us than all the grains of sand in the world. And he has the names of ours written on the palm of His hand. I want you to know that you are loved.

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You are fearfully and wonderfully made, and we are not here just to exist and coexist. We are here to be Champions for the Brokenhearted for all those who have not yet come to Jesus who were born and also be the voice for the voiceless.

So please get engaged, stand for life. Go to standforlife.com, and I really encourage you right now that if you are not part of the Circle of Champions, to go to the website lifewithoutlimbs.org and find the tab where you can get into this incredible group seeing some things and recordings that are not available publicly as well, and join the fold, the Circle of Champions for the Brokenhearted with Life Without Limbs as we continue to serve those who are brokenhearted and lead them to the hope found in Jesus Christ. I love you so much. Thank you so much for watching. God bless you, and I'll see you next time. Bye-bye.