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*Caring* for those considering  
**ABORTION**

**SESSION 3:**

Understanding the Pregnant Woman's Perspective & Feelings, Part 2

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*making* **LIFE**  
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*Equipping the Church to offer compassion, hope, help,  
and discipleship to women and men considering abortion.*

## SECTION 2.7: THE PREGNANT WOMAN: HER FEELINGS

Feelings are powerful persuaders. As a Life Disciple, you must pay attention to the feelings a person expresses, both verbally and nonverbally. Women facing difficult pregnancy decisions are often overwhelmed with negative emotions. Many say they are unsupported and incapable of achieving their goals while caring for a baby (or an additional baby, if they are already caring for a child).<sup>7</sup> Abortion is often a desperate choice.

A woman faced with a difficult pregnancy decision will likely experience some of the following feelings and emotions:

**Fear:** She may be scared to tell her parents or partner. She may be overwhelmed and intimidated to face an unknown, completely different future than the one she imagined. She may be anxious about the impact a pregnancy, birth, or abortion could have on her health.

**Confusion:** Her perception of her circumstances may affect her ability to make well thought-out decisions. Her confusion may be a result of desperation to find relief from the painful circumstances of her unplanned pregnancy. She may want the pain to stop and may go to any end for relief.

**Worthlessness:** Women with a poor self-image may experience this feeling more intensely when faced with an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy. If she perceives that her pregnancy will lead to rejection by her partner or other important people in her life, she may feel particularly worthless, as well as alone or unwanted.

**Anger:** She may direct her anger toward herself, her partner or husband, or her parents. She may be incensed with herself for getting into this situation and not preventing it. A failed contraceptive may diffuse her anger toward herself and others, perhaps even leading her to feel justified in choosing abortion.

**Guilt:** Guilt can be overwhelming. It can result in an acute sense of a need for help and change, or a desperate need to rationalize or deny the consequences of her behavior. She may be ambivalent about her sexual activity, vacillating between feeling guilty and justifying her behavior. She may feel remorse about not preventing the pregnancy. She may regret using alcohol or drugs if they contributed to the sex that resulted in the pregnancy. The need to justify actions and thoughts will often intensify if she senses she is being judged.

**Joy:** Alternatively, she may have none of those negative feelings, or she may have a mixture of both negative and positive emotions. She may welcome her baby with joy. Her circumstances may, however, eventually threaten her joy and lead to some or all of the negative feelings we just discussed.

## PRESSURES

Outside pressures may also impact a woman's perspective of an unplanned pregnancy. Some pressures can present a threat to her well-being, while others may be based on what she perceives other people may think or feel about her because of the pregnancy.

Pressures typically come from three primary areas:

**People:** She may feel pressure from her parents, partner, or friends. This is not necessarily pressure to abort, although it may be. Just the idea of having to tell certain people about the pregnancy could motivate her to consider abortion. Whether she aborts or carries her baby to term, she is intensely aware of the thoughts and feelings of influential people in her life. These powerful influencers can be positive or negative. Never underestimate the role of others in the life of the woman facing a difficult pregnancy as she makes her decision. No matter what her plans are when she learns she is pregnant, she may face pressure to abort later. Offering to share abortion information with her will help her become fully informed about her pregnancy decision, and it will better prepare her for the reactions of influencers who may want her to abort.

**Circumstance:** She may feel pressure because of finances, work, school, the need to care for other children, her living situation, and lack of support from the baby's father. Women are more likely to choose abortion if they feel unsupported in these key areas.<sup>8,9</sup> The difference between the joy of pregnancy and the difficulty of pregnancy is often a matter of circumstance. She may ask, "How will I stay employed? Can I stay in school? Will he leave me? Will my parents disown me?"

**Culture:** The pressure exerted by today's culture—particularly the cultural pressure exerted through mass and social media—can be enormous. Much of the music, movies, television programs, and magazines in today's culture support sex without guilt and abortion-on-demand as a default response to a surprise pregnancy. Thousands of sexually explicit messages are conveyed to her each year through media. She may feel significant pressure to link her desirability and personal worth with her sexual availability to men, as well as her willingness to avoid pregnancy or abort if she becomes pregnant.

Careful helping skills, an understanding of how people respond during a difficult situation, and compassionate care will help alleviate some of the intensity of these pressures.

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ISBN: 978-0-9972285-0-2

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