

Making Life Disciples™ Next Steps

(Now that you're through, what should you do?!)

By Rev. Dr. Greg Austen, Executive Director of Church Outreach and Engagement with Amy Scherschligt, Making Life Disciples Specialist and Gary Springer, Director of Church Outreach and Engagement (West Coast)

Note: This document tells you how to make the most of your training as a Life Disciple and build a Pro Abundant Life culture in your church. It also gives you plenty of meeting content for at least your team's first year of ministry:

STEP I: Start with the basics and maximize your investment:

1. If you haven't already, ensure that each team member who has completed MLD receives a Certificate of Achievement signed by your team leader and pastor. Editable and printable certificates are available [HERE](#).
2. Prepare for your first team meeting (or integrate the following into an existing team if it's vision will be living under that structure. For example, an existing [Stephen Ministry](#) or [Respect Life](#) team). Your team may start with as few as 3-5 people.
 - Invite your team to a meet at a specific time and place. Give ample notice and include when the meeting will end.
 - Prepare the meeting agenda and email it to all attendees one week prior.
 - You can always meet to "just" pray. Prayer is significant business and a great reason for meeting in its own right.
3. Hold your first team meeting.
 - Hand out a written agenda: a concise, prioritized list of items to be covered in the meeting.
 - Always begin a meeting with something encouraging.
 - Begin and end the meeting on time
 - Anchor the meeting in Christ. Let prayer permeate the meeting. Start with a brief biblical devotional.
 - Read through the [MLD Next Steps document](#)-- especially Step 1 and the three FAQ's. Save Steps 2 and 3 for your next meeting to maximize focus and not overwhelm your team.
 - Invite interaction while avoiding "rabbit trails." Keep the meeting moving.
 - Keep minutes.
 - Decide when you will meet next and try to determine a regular schedule (e.g. monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly; etc. monthly are ideal for creating consistency and momentum).

- Wrap up discussion by identifying "Next steps." Identify a who, what, and when with each action item.
 - Close with prayer.
 - Email a recap. Summarize the meeting's action items and attach the minutes. It's a good practice to "CC" the pastor. Keep your pastor updated on all activities; seek his or her approval and response as appropriate.
4. Raise awareness at your church that there are Life Disciples ready to help women and men facing unplanned pregnancies. It is essential that your church community and those that visit your church's website know that there are Life Disciples standing ready in your church to help women and men who need it.
- Ask your pastor to have a [commissioning service](#) so that people know you have been equipped and are available to offer compassion, hope, and help to men and women facing unplanned pregnancies. [Here are two options for doing this.](#)
 - Meet with church leaders and small groups to get to know them and introduce our Life Team's mission.
 - Make sure to establish a point person(s) on your team who is available Sunday morning. Inform counselors and prayer teams regarding who the designated, available, and accessible members on your team are.
 - Have something available on your church's resource center table.
 - Make sure there is regular mention of your ministry from the pulpit and in the bulletin.
 - Consider hosting your own private Facebook group/page. (We can help you with the setup if you haven't done this before. **Contact Gary Springer at: gspringer@care-net.org**)
 - Offer "pregnancy decision coaching" on your church's website. Link it to your Life Disciples team or your local pregnancy center. Here are a [variety of images](#) and messaging for your website designed to connect the abortion-vulnerable with trained individuals in your church that can offer compassion, help, and hope.
 - Consider putting some brochures in the men's and women's restrooms that communicate to any considering abortion that confidential help and support are available.
 - [Before You Decide](#)
 - [Before She Decides](#)
 - Here are some more excellent options from [Focus on the Family](#)
5. Be determined and ready to share your life with others. The goal of Making Life Disciples™ is not just a program to implement but a way to prepare your church with lives to imitate (disciplers like you). You are now equipped and trained. Is there a man or woman in your congregation you could come alongside to mentor and disciple? Is there someone at your local Pregnancy Center that needs mentoring or discipleship?

6. Hold or host an MLD training for senior-highers and college students. Remember, Making Life Disciples™ is, first, a way to equip a select group of first-responders to offer compassion, hope, and help to women and men facing unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancies and, second, a way to raise the life-affirming IQ of the whole church—including senior-highers and college students related to abortion. Here are three practical alternatives and/or enhancements related to youth/students:
 - Use [Care Net's Pro-Life 101](#) course. We took the first session, "The Sanctity of Human Life," from Making Life Disciples™ 1.0 and broke it into six online sessions. Each session comes via email with a 5-15-minute video segment and a handout — one a week for six weeks. This free online course is a great way to promote the pro-life message in your sphere of influence with intelligence, credibility, love, and effectiveness. What's more, it takes less than 2 hours of time over six weeks! In fact, after six weeks, if desired, you'll have the content to use for another class, if desired. Pro-Life 101 can easily be shared on Facebook.
 - We also recommend Stephanie Gray: "[Abortion: From Controversy to Civility.](#)" This hour-long cultural conversation from "talks at Google" is extremely respectful, thorough, and compelling.
 - Strengthen preventative efforts in your church related to the pro-life cause. For example, how is your church training the next generation to embrace biblical sexuality? We recommend:
 - [Thewholesextalk.com](#) This resource is also available as a bundled package with *Making Life Disciples* [here](#).
 - [God's Design for Sex Series](#), 4 Books by Stanton Jones
7. Stay gospel-centered and lead in ways that honor Christ.
 - As you move forward to serve your church and others, always remember your own ongoing and daily need for the compassion, hope, and help you will be offering. The gospel refreshes, motivates, and gives us joy to serve with grace and patience rather than shame, guilt, manipulation, and frustration. Allow God to continue to work in and through you.
 - Encourage, encourage, encourage! Lead with grace, not shame. Do all you can to help the culture of your church be one of compassion, help, and hope –welcoming community where people are strengthened, genuineness is encouraged, and Christianity is a matter of the heart.
 - Pray that God will bring people into your life and church that need Life Disciples.
 - Be patient and persevere. Abortion is a very private and hidden issue. It's not uncommon for it to be over a year before a team sees a woman or man considering abortion within the church or receives a "referral" from a local center. At one of your team meetings, read "[Making Life Disciples: Allison's Story](#)" to set realistic expectations and stay encouraged.

- **Remember ministry flows at the speed of trust.** Even when it comes to working with pastors and pregnancy leaders, it takes time to establish trusted relationships.
- 8. Introduce Making Life Disciples™ to other churches in your area. Use this ["Talk & Pick"](#) promotional to help with this.
- 9. Practice MLD active listening skills so you are ready when you need to be.

STEP II: Learn from your local pregnancy center. Strengthen the connection between their vital mission work and the family strengthening and discipleship efforts of your church:

1. Get to know the vital mission work of your local pregnancy center. Schedule a tour of their facility. Find out what they need and how you might help and/or make your church aware of ways to help. Don't know the pregnancy center near you? Look [HERE](#) to find one.
2. Invite pregnancy center executive director to your team meeting.
3. Volunteer time at your local pregnancy center. In addition to keeping your MLD skills sharp, this is a great way to solidify the connection between your church and pregnancy center. This will also create natural bridges to invite center clients to your church.
4. Host a donation drive for your local center.
5. Participate in their baby bottle drive, Walk for Life etc..
6. Recruit volunteers at your church to become client advocates.
7. Make "refresh" bags for first-time clients. These might consist of water bottles, a granola bar, Chapstick, hand lotion, etc.
8. Collect gift cards and other thank-you gifts for the center's volunteers.
9. Bring church members on a tour of the center.
10. With support of the pastor, invite the center's executive director to speak to your congregation or a group at your church.
11. Recruit a church leader to pray weekly at the center right before staff opens the doors.
12. Collect diapers and baby clothing to donate to the center.
13. "Success is when preparation meets opportunity." This being the case, gather a list of resources in your community. Again, life decisions need life support. Consider needs that those facing an unplanned pregnancy might have: transportation, housing, counseling, job placement, food, finances, etc. Consult your local pregnancy center or other ministries as well so you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

*****Note: One of the most important milestones in implementing *Making Life Disciples* is to have your team build a relational bridge between a church point person and a pregnancy center point person that is sufficiently focused and strong enough to implement systems and processes that connect center clients with local church discipleship. Your church and center can then work together to answer this question: How will you connect clients with the flourishing that comes through relationship with Jesus Christ and discipleship in a local church? Again, ministry flows at the speed of trust and it may take you 1-2 years to get to this step but it will be well worth it!**

STEP III: Think holistically and— in sync with God's timing— expand ministry focus

1. For ideas or guidance on strategy, reach out to Gary Springer, Director of Church Outreach and Engagement (West Coast) at gspringer@care-net.org. Make sure the discipleship you are inviting men and women into is holistic. Watch and make others aware of Care Net's Pro-Abundant Life approach. You can access a two-minute video on that here. For more on this, [watch Care Net's President and CEO Roland Warren speak on Care Net's Pro Abundant Life vision.](#)
2. Surrounding MLD with a team is essential to ensuring that the vision of MLD lives on long after the program has run. Discuss if [Churches For Life](#) ministry training is right for you and, if it is, set a time to go through it together. This training will help you learn how to lead and function as an effective, gospel-driven, "Life Team." Additionally, it will help you:
 - Work more effectively WITH your pastor(s).
 - Make sure your efforts are motivated by grace and the gospel.
 - Craft a unique mission statement for your team and keep the right destination in front of you.
3. Consider enlisting a prayer support team and send them regular updates.
4. Consider becoming a MLD volunteer Regional Coordinator associated the vision of makinglifedisciples.com. If interested, contact Dr. Greg Austen, Care Net's Executive Director of Church Outreach and Engagement at gausten@care-net.org.
5. Consider recruiting a friend to start MLD at his or her church.
6. Consider implementing a program like [Embrace Grace](#) for young women facing unplanned pregnancies (see our Life Affirming Partners below).
7. Consider starting or strengthening an existing ministry to single moms.
8. Remember there are older, married women, and/or those who are already mothers who often feel overwhelmed or lost in an unplanned pregnancy. Consider providing strategic childcare or starting a "mother's day out."
9. Consider implementing or strengthening an existing fatherhood class or program.
10. Consider implementing or strengthening an existing parenting class or program.
11. Consider implementing or strengthening an existing marriage or premarital class or program.
12. Consider implementing or strengthening an existing post-abortive class (see our Life Affirming Partners below).
13. Learn about adoption and foster care and make your church aware of ways they can get involved.

14. Invite a pastor or other church leader to meet your team.
15. Participate in the [40 Days for Life](#).
16. ***This is important! Regarding the suggestions above — whenever possible — promote the classes or events as being sponsored by the church's Making Life Disciples™ ministry. This will highlight the availability of Making Life Disciples™ services.

Essential FAQ's for a *Making Life Disciples* (MLD) Team

June 2019

Question #1: Should an MLD team member ever refer to an abortion provider?

Answer: MLD ministries in churches must align with the values of Care Net-affiliated pregnancy centers, which do not refer for or provide abortions. If a client is transitioned to a church and someone from the MLD ministry assists them in getting an abortion, it will distort and destroy the integrity the ministry resource Making Life Disciples, as well as the church/pregnancy center partnership.

Question #2: Should an MLD team member ever accompany or encourage someone else to accompany a woman to an appointment with an abortion provider?

In the movie *Bella*, a friend accompanies a woman to an abortion clinic even though he is against what she is planning to do. In this fictitious account, the woman ends up not going through with the abortion. The scene implies that what that the friend did was wise and compassionate. Presumably, his thinking was that Christianity is about relationships and, above all else, he wanted to preserve the relationship with the woman; to say, "even if you make the wrong choice, I will not abandon you." Isn't it good that the friend was willing to do this and aren't his actions consistent with Jesus who ate with sinners (e.g. Matthew 9:10-13)?

Answer: No. The MLD ministry will be greatly damaged if someone takes a church member to get an abortion. Here's why:

- As Christians, we are call to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). In other words, love and truth must always go together. 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 gives great guidance on this. It says that love is patient and kind (compassionate) and it rejoices with the truth. In the case of abortion, what is the truth? The child in the womb is created in the image of God and to kill the child rejects God's call to protect the vulnerable. And this is why Jesus' eating with sinners does not apply: eating is a morally neutral act; taking human life is not.
- Knowing the physical, emotional and spiritual consequences of sin, Jesus did not participate in sin or facilitate the sin of others. Instead, he actively encouraged others to avoid sin. Yet, when people denied him by their choices, he was there afterward, as he was with Peter (John 21:15-17), to lovingly restore them.
- Here's another way to think about it. A con man or woman is patient and kind . That is how he or she gains your confidence. (Con man actually stands for confidence man.) But, a con man is not loving because he (or she) does not rejoice with the truth.
- Or imagine a scenario where a "Life Disciple" takes someone else's daughter in the church to get an abortion and the parents find out. Given the commitment to confidentiality, this kind of thing could certainly happen. Moreover, since MLD is an extension of Care Net, the church, and the pastoral

team, a "Life Disciple" should never do something that misrepresents or could damage these relationships.

- People have a tendency to blame others for the mistakes that they make, or not take responsibility for their own mistakes. If you think about it, that's something that is always part of an abortion decision: an unborn child dies to cover or get rid of "the mistakes" of another. Therefore, if someone has an abortion and an MLD team member—who is supposed to be against abortion—assists in some way, it is easy to see how he or she could be blamed rather than celebrated for being there.
- Finally and related to this, a person who takes a woman for an abortion may be haunted by guilt in the future. For all of us, even if our intention is to be "nice" or supportive, we need to be careful we don't fall into sin. Galatians 6:1 applies: "Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself." (NLT) An abortion is something we don't want to be part of or have on our conscience. In a scenario like that, Satan always tries to destroy hope in us by despair. In other words, we might easily be able to forgive the woman who had the abortion, but not ourselves.

If you are asked to accompany someone to an abortion appointment, a good response is: "I am here for you. And I would love to support you and the child growing inside of you in any way that I can. I just can't be a part of anything that would bring harm to either of you. I would love to be part of exploring any and every realistic alternative to the choice you are considering. I believe with all my heart that your unborn child is life worth sacrificing for, not a life worth sacrificing. Also, know that if you do decide to go through with your decision to have an abortion, I will not abandon you. I will still be here for you for whatever support you may need in the future. But I can't assist you with your abortion."

Question #3: Since adoption is always a better option than abortion, should MLD team members be open to referring children to same-sex couples?

Answer: No. Care Net upholds the biblical view of marriage, which is between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24). Additionally, since Care Net's pro-life ethic is tied to a larger Pro Abundant Life vision, the integrity of the MLD vision is linked to both the sanctity of life and the sanctity of marriage and family as God designed them. Again, for more on this, [watch Care Net's President and CEO Roland Warren speak on Care Net's Pro Abundant Life vision.](#)

MAKING LIFE DISCIPLES' LIFE-AFFIRMING PARTNERS

These ministry partners all have excellent resources that can educate, train, and further equip your team.

Healing Resources for Abortion Recovery

[Forgiven and Set Free](#) is a world-renowned Bible study by Linda Cochrane – Executive Director of Hopeline Women's Center in Danbury, Connecticut, Linda is associated with the term PACE (Post-Abortion Counseling and Education) that addresses post-abortion trauma and recovery.

[My Ashes to Beauty](#) is a ministry that integrates the Word of God, prayer, recovery tools, and a safe, loving environment for women to share their abortion stories. Their site hosts blogs to read and meditate on, resources, information about a weekly **Sunday afternoon Christ-centered topical conference call**, Bible studies, and individual support when needed. All inquiries are confidential. Ministry verses are Isa. 61:1-3

[SaveOne](#) offers help for men, women, and family members/friends, through group study, online study, or answering questions and giving encouragement through self-study. They **have a Bible-based curriculum that was written by our founder Sheila Harper**. Sheila chose abortion in 1985 for her first child and lived with mental and emotional anguish for seven years following that choice. Their book is written from her personal experience of healing after abortion. Check out their "[Success Stories](#)" to see what other people are saying about the help SaveOne gave them.

Building a Culture of Relational Apologetics Around MLD

[Equal Rights Institute](#) - Equal Rights Institute trains pro-life advocates to think clearly, reason honestly, and argue persuasively. They use speaking, writing, podcasts, campus outreach, and online courses to equip pro-life people in the areas of **practical dialogue tips, pro-life philosophy, and relational apologetics**. They believe that the pro-life movement becoming more loving and thoughtful is a necessary (although not sufficient) condition to change our culture enough to end legal abortion. This is why they speak so often on relational apologetics, which they define as “cultivating relationships with people who have different beliefs, for the sake of genuine friendship and for discovering truth together.”

Building a Gospel-Centered Team Around MLD

[Churches for Life](#) - The mission of Churches for Life is to nourish churches as gospel-driven champions of life. Their distinctive focus is to **start Life Teams in churches** who work with the church leadership to equip their congregation to honor and dignify all life from conception to natural death. Churches for Life trains Life Teams and then provides support and encouragement through ongoing coaching. Their three passions are 1) The gospel of Jesus Christ 2) the local church and 3) championing life.

Discipleship Content/Event for the End-User

[Embrace Grace](#) - Embrace Grace is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed to provide emotional, **practical and spiritual support for single, young women** who find themselves in an unintended pregnancy. The primary goal of Embrace Grace is to empower churches across the nation to be a safe and non-judging place for the girls to run to when they find out they are pregnant, instead of the last place they are welcomed because of shame and guilt.

[The Vox Project](#) wants to inspire and equip pastors and ministry leaders to lead the way in speaking the truth about abortion with grace and compassion. Through prayer and fasting, compelling videos from prominent Christian leaders, a film, and other resources, Vox seeks to get churches engaged in the life issue.

[RightNow Media](#) is a kind of “Christian Netflix” with lots of resources for ministry leaders and small groups, serving over 16,000 churches every day. Although you won’t be able to access the content unless you’re a RightNow Media subscriber, here is the link to Making Life Disciples on their platform:
<https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/288762>

(revised 10_12_2020)