

Newborn Promise Podcast

"How Pregnancy Help Centers Are Building Families Like Never Before"

Audra Haney:

Thanks for tuning into the Newborn Promise Podcast, a production of Graham Blanchard Incorporated. You're listening to an interview with Kirk Walden, called, How Pregnancy Helps Centers Can Change the World. For today's show notes, transcript and more information about your Newborn Promise Project, please visit grahamblanchard.com.

Welcome back to the Newborn Promise Podcast. I am Audra Haney, and today's interview may seem like a bit of a departure from the regular content in our Building your Family lineup. But the more we thought about life and families, the more we were burdened that we had to stop and address the sanctity of life, that every life matters, even the life of the unborn child. We wanted to do this with great passion and clarity, but also in love and not condemnation.

Last week, we shared an amazingly powerful testimony from Jill Cooper about how God healed and restored her after her decision to have an abortion in her 20s. Jill talked a lot about pregnancy help centers, the role they could play in helping preserve life, and also how her volunteer work in her later years has brought her further healing. We wanted to expand on that conversation today and tell how the church can make a huge difference through these pregnancy help centers.

And just as detailed and wonderful as God is, my next-door neighbor at the time, Kirk Walden, just so happens to be one of the most sought-out pro-life speakers in the country and the author of the book, *The Wall*, inspired by the story of Nehemiah. Kirk believes that the end of the abortion culture as we know it has less to do with politics, and more to do with the church stepping up and providing the help, safety, a wall, so to speak, for these unplanned pregnancies and families affected by them.

So, we had a great conversation around my kitchen table. It was so encouraging to me that, despite the politics of the day or popular opinion, the trends show that if the church could just love like the church does best, with the hope of Christ, we could see the end of the abortion industry as we know it.

I'm excited to hear your heart today, just a message for the church and how the church can jump in and really support the pro-life movement, and how it really is our responsibility to protect life. So, you, Kirk, are so passionate about helping pregnancy centers and really spreading the

message that the life of the unborn child is sacred and precious. Can you tell us a little bit about your journey and why you became so passionate about this calling?

Kirk Walden:

Well, it actually started with the church. And thanks for having me today, by the way. I had a little drive back. I was in Ohio last night, and good to be back home and right across the street from you guys. But it started in the church.

I was 18 years old, a freshman in college at Auburn University. The pastor was doing a series of six messages on issues that Christians needed to be thinking about leading up to the 1980 election, and one of them was the sanctity of life. And I didn't have any experience with it. I hadn't even thought about what it meant to be pro-life. I was a brand new Christian, who'd become a Christian the May before entering college.

So, I was 17 when I became a Christian. Just turned 18, and I hear this message and I think, "You know what? Lord, put me on the front lines. That's where I want to be. I want to be on the front lines of this. I want to see abortion become obsolete in my lifetime." And that was my dream, my vision I believed the Lord had planted on my heart, and I got involved in the political realm of all kinda different things, public policy.

But then, when I was 28, there was an opening for a directorship at a pregnancy help center, there in Auburn, Alabama. And I was asked to put my name in by a friend, and I just thought I'd see what it was all about. I was supporting it each month, financially, but I didn't know what they did. Going through the interview process, I realized, "This is the front line." Because when you have young women and young men who are facing this situation, they are scared to death.

Nowhere else to turn, a lot of them are thinking, especially college students, thinking their only answer is to end the pregnancy so they can get on with their lives. Somebody needs to be in the gap. Somebody needs to take the by the hand and walk with them through this time. And if somebody will, then we could see abortion become obsolete in our lifetime. And we're beginning to see that trend grow, and grow and grow. So, that's kinda how I got started.

That was, what? 36 years ago.

Audra Haney:

Wow. And I love that. I love the hope in it, because we hear ... you know, I think when we look at the culture, I think it's easy to become discouraged and think, "Man, we are on the losing side of this battle." And yet, some things you shared in your book *The Wall*, which is an

awesome read, but really, the numbers are pointing and saying something totally different.

Kirk Walden: Yes, they are. The trend is moving in our direction. I'm not saying we've got this solved or anything like that, but when I first heard about this, back in 1980, there were more than 2,000 abortion centers. There were, maybe, a couple of pregnancy help ministries out there, and they were giving out free diapers, pregnancy tests. That's all they could do.

Today, however, there are less than 800 abortion centers left and there are more than 2,500 pregnancy help centers. And a lot of us are offering ultrasound, we're offering STD and STI testing to reach out in all areas of women's health. And on top of that, we're reaching fathers like never before. And so, the abortion rate is beginning to drop, finally, and I think the trend is definitely in our direction. We just need to continue to push.

Audra Haney: Yeah, absolutely. And I want to back up a little bit and cover a couple of things you just mentioned, which is ... one of them is the ultrasound technology and getting the push to get those in our pregnancy help centers. Tell me, why is that so important and what difference have you seen when that happens?

Kirk Walden: It's been fascinating, Audra. In the mid-'90s, I was approached by a guy named Tom Glessner, who had been president of Christian Action Council in Washington, then became president of Care Net. And he said, "Kirk, I want to see us put 1,000 ultrasound machines in centers across the country," and I thought he was nuts.

But I began to listen to him and, in 1997, our little center in Alabama put an ultrasound machine in our office. When we could show them their child on that screen, they would say things like, "I had no idea it was a baby."

Audra Haney: Wow.

Kirk Walden: And in fact, one time, I remember a physician saying, "I believe we just saw even the child's ears wiggling this morning on the ultrasound." And we'd see dads come out of the ultrasound room crying because they had no idea, and they were thinking, "We're gonna go end this pregnancy and get it over with." And then they'd say, "This is my son or daughter. I had no idea." And so, it's having a huge impact. In fact, nationwide, about 86% of women thinking of ending their pregnancy, once they see their child on the screen they'll choose life.

Audra Haney: That's a huge statistic.

Kirk Walden: It is.

Audra Haney: That is a big number.

Kirk Walden: It is.

Audra Haney: And really, you just touched on it with the dads, and I think that is an element that maybe we haven't concentrated on, but these fatherhood incentives are really on the rise. Tell me why those are so important, and how mentoring and counseling for these dads in helping.

Kirk Walden: It's all part of the growing up process, I believe, for pregnancy help centers. See, I was the director of a center back in '91, and even I wasn't grasping it until later on in my tenure there that ended in '99, and then I started working in the centers around the country. But I think, in the beginning, we saw these guys as predatorial, deadbeat and all this kinda stuff.

I was looking across from a dad one time, and I said, "What do you think you'll do if you find out your girlfriend's pregnant?" He shrugged his shoulders and he says, "Well, I guess it'd be whatever she wants to do." And it didn't connect then but it does now. He was scared. He'd been told by society, "You don't have a say so. It's whatever she chooses." That's what the politicians are telling us, that's what the culture is telling us.

But another statistic ... I don't want to bore you with numbers, but 83% of women surveyed after abortions say if dad had been more involved, they probably would have chosen life. And so, we're now realizing ... we've grown up in these centers and a lot of us now have mentoring programs for dads. And everybody from guys who are in youth pastorship have come on board to do this, to men who are retired, to a 300-pound offensive lineman for East Carolina University, who stepped into this. And he reaches out to dads, and they'll come in and we say, "Hey, we'll walk with you through this time."

Because a lot of these guys have never had a dad of their own and they've never known what it looks like to be a dad, and somebody needs to take them by the hand, too. And as we do, they're jumping on board. And when I heard a guy at a bank, one time, stand up and say, "They told me I could do it as a dad," and he said, "I'm doing it now, and I'm gonna be a good father to my daughter and I'm gonna treat her well," it changes everything.

And so, if we as pregnancy centers can get between those who are thinking of ending their pregnancy and the abortion center, and they come to us first, they have all of these resources available now. Not

every center has a fatherhood program, not every center has an ultrasound, but they're growing more, and more and more. And it's interesting because it's across denominational lines. The Knights of Columbus have put 500 ultrasound machines across the country, a Catholic organization.

I've been at centers ... one night in Maryland, I said, "We need an ultrasound machine." They came up, they said, "How much?" I said, "\$35,000." By the end of the night, we had two.

Audra Haney: Wow.

Kirk Walden: So, it's amazing to see the ultrasound and, now, the dads' programs beginning to step up.

Audra Haney: Yeah. And you've already mentioned several different ways that people can jump in and help, but I think you share in your book a great overall vision for how the church, how men, and women and families can jump in. But share a little bit with us how the everyday person is so important to this battle.

Kirk Walden: Well, isn't it interesting that when we look at scriptures it's always ordinary people accomplishing extraordinary things, when God puts his spirit in people and they begin to move forward. And that's exactly what we're seeing. I mean, it's lawyers ... I was talking to a guy last night who has a huge foundation that helps non-profits, and he got excited about what he was seeing here and he's looking at options. We're gonna connect. To that person who goes, "Well, I've got a couple of extra hours a week."

I'll tell you an interesting story. A guy I used to pray with in college, we would pray every Wednesday night, I believe it was. Or Tuesday, I can't remember. But that was a long time ago, Audra, 36 years. But we would pray, and he went to a pregnancy center and I didn't know anything about the center at the time. But he went there and he said, "What can I do as a college male?" And they said, "Well, you can clean the bathrooms." And he said, "I'll do it." He did it every week and he began to get an affinity for life, and he ended up becoming president of one of the largest adoption agencies in the Southeast.

Audra Haney: That's amazing.

Kirk Walden: Yeah. And so it's, what can I do? And I think, a lot of times, it's walking in the door of a pregnancy help ministry and saying, "Here's what I do during the day. Can you help you?" I mean, there's folks who say, "Look, I know all the Dave Ramsey stuff. I do Financial Peace University. Can I help you?" Absolutely, you can. Because we've got single moms, and

we've got young families of moms and dads who have no idea they need that kinda help.

The gamut is so wide. I wish I could go through the 100 different things that people can do. It's everything from medical professionals stepping up, to that person who says, "Look, I can file and I can sit down and listen." I think one of the things that makes women more fearful than anything else is saying, "What would I do if a young lady comes in and says, 'I think I need to end my pregnancy.' I can't do that." Well, you can. If you've got two ears and a heart for the Lord, you can do it.

And so, stepping in and saying, "I'm willing. God, put me to work," the possibilities are limitless.

Audra Haney: Yeah. And what encouragement or hope would you share to those who are really looking at the world today, culture today and election year, and saying, "There's no hope?" What would you lead us out with by saying?

Kirk Walden: I think about Paul. I think about Paul, who was in a culture even much worse than ours, who said ... he basically said, "I'm here to turn the world upside down." That's what they're accused of in Act 176, the apostles were. And here's Paul, who, I remember one letter he writes, he's in jail and he's writing all this stuff. And then, he gets to the end and he says, "By the way, I'm in jail at the moment." You know, I'm paraphrasing here.

But I think about that and I think our culture, yes, it looks like it's going downhill, but this is also a time that could be ripe for a new awakening in this country. Because people are looking for answers right now, and the church has it. We have that hope in Jesus Christ. When people come to follow Jesus Christ, they're changed. And when we get involved in these pregnancy centers and begin to build families, we change our culture.

If you want the answer to crime, you want the answer to poverty, you want the answer to any one of these issues, you put dads back in the home. And that's one of the things we can do. And better than a dad is a dad who's following Jesus Christ, and committed. We do that, we change the world. I know what the trend looks like, but I also see the underpinnings of turning the world upside down. We've got to grab hold of that and go forward.

Audra Haney: Well, thank you so much for joining us with our live interview with Kirk. We so appreciate your time and we hope that he has inspired you to dive in and get involved, in some way, supporting these pregnancy help centers.

Join us next week for our last episode in our Building Your Family series, with Dove Award-winning Ellie Holcomb as she talks about how parenthood has brought her even closer to Jesus.

Remember, you can get more information about Kirk, today's show notes, transcript, and more information about your Newborn Promise Project at grahamblanchard.com.