

FOREWORD BY DAVID PLATT

THE

**ALTERNATIVE**

TO

**ABORTION**

WHY WE MUST BE  
PRO **ABUNDANT** LIFE

**ROLAND C. WARREN**

SAMPLE

# CHAPTER ONE



## WHY I CHOSE LIFE

“What’s a nice girl like you doing out on a night like this?”

“Really corny!” she replied. A slow smile spread across her face, and I knew the line was more effective than she would admit. I walked her back to her dorm. It was clear from the start we had a special connection.

Yvette was a cute freshman, just one year behind me at Princeton. We lived in the same dorm and shared the same cafeteria, where I’d see her now and then. I thought she was cute and wanted to meet her, but I was shy. So when the opportunity to regale her with a corny pickup line presented itself after football practice one day, I took my shot. I had no idea how that brief conversation was about to change everything.

Yvette and I were soon inseparable. We ate our meals together, spent all our time together, and fell in love. We were both Christians. We knew what we were supposed to do. But we found ourselves in love at college with not a lot of supervision. Eventually, we became intimate.

I knew well what the risks were with this kind of behavior, but let’s just say they weren’t front of mind. Until one day, while I was home on a midterm break, I got a call from Yvette.

“I think I’m pregnant,” she whispered nervously.

These are the only words I remember her saying, because after that everything went into slow motion. This was a life-defining moment. I didn't have a framework for what would happen next. I wouldn't say I panicked, but the weight of an uncertain future felt heavier than ever.

## **You're Going to Have an Abortion, Aren't You?**

We returned from the break and Yvette went to the clinic on campus to confirm what she already knew to be true. The first thing the nurse asked her, or (more accurately) told her was, "You're going to have an abortion, aren't you?" Yvette said no. She explained to the nurse that she wanted to get married, have her baby, and raise her child.

Undeterred, the nurse continued her interrogation. "What year are you?"

"A sophomore."

"Well, what do you want to do when you graduate?"

"I want to become a doctor."

"Well, how are you going to get through Princeton, let alone medical school, with a baby? How will you ever be a doctor with a baby?"

Yvette didn't know. Would all her dreams end here? *What if the nurse was right?* It seemed far easier to focus on what would be lost if we had this baby versus what could be gained. Plus, we were told that Princeton would pay for the abortion but not the delivery. So, as near-penniless college students, we were on our own.

Back in the dorm room, we sat on the edge of the bed (which is obviously where we should have spent all our time), and talked it all through. Yvette was shell-shocked at the lack of support she received. The nurse was an older woman—maybe even a mother herself. She could have said, "Ok, let's see how we can make your 'choice' work. Let me help you." Or, she could have asked, "Who's the father? Can he come to your next visit? Let's make sure that he is prepared to support your choice and his child." But she didn't. Instead, the nurse suggested an abortion and cast a negative light on Yvette's life should she decide to give birth.

So, there we were—on the edge of the bed. We didn't want to complicate one mistake with a second mistake. We were Christians and knew God's standard and what he required. At the same time, we were in a community of Christians. We knew this would certainly be embarrassing. Covering it up with abortion may have helped us "save face" in church on Sunday mornings, but we were determined not to focus on that.

We wanted to get married and had already talked about our future together. No, it wasn't our plan to have a baby first and then get married. Yet we knew God was there. He was, somehow, in the middle of all of it. He hadn't left us or forsaken us, even in our mistakes. He would be with us through the hard journey ahead.

We had only just begun to understand how hard it would be. Each of us had to tell our parents. Yvette was so scared to tell her father. She had been hiding the pregnancy for four months from folks on campus, but she was beginning to show. I urged her to write him a letter. A week or so passed, and then she got the call from him. He said, "I love you, and if you want to get married, you can get married. If you don't want to get married, you can come home."

He was also clear that if we did get married, we were going to have to be adults. We would be on our own.

The first person I told about the pregnancy was my mother. I can still hear the disappointment in her voice. I was the first person to have a shot at graduating from college, and attending Princeton was a very big deal. She was understandably concerned that an unplanned pregnancy would stop me from graduating.

My path to Princeton had not been particularly easy. My parents split up when I was about seven, so I grew up without my dad. My mom had my older brother at age seventeen and me at nineteen. My two younger siblings were born shortly after that. At age twenty-three, my mom was a single mother with four kids under eight years of age. To go from that situation to a place like Princeton was pretty unique. My mom was proud of me, and had hopes and dreams related to what I would do with my Ivy League education. She was worried that if we had this baby she would see her life story revisited in

me. But I was committed to a different vision. I knew I didn't want to repeat the pattern I'd grown up with.

As a kid, I loved watching *The Brady Bunch*. I remember comparing that family to my own experience and seeing no similarities. Many of my aunts and cousins were single mothers, and my community seemed to be what I call a single-mother culture where there weren't a lot of married men around. Seeing men who were husbands and fathers on TV shows or at church was aspirational for me. On some level, I recognized that something in my life was missing, and I didn't want to repeat that same cycle in any way, shape, or form.

In any case, soon after telling our parents, we stood before the justice of the peace in Princeton, New Jersey, surrounded by a few college friends, and we said our "I do's." Yvette was five months pregnant, beaming with radiant joy. Because they didn't offer transitional housing at school, Yvette went home to Texas to have the baby. I stayed on campus, worked, and began to play football for another season.

In late August, while the team was in two-a-day training sessions, I got a call that it was time for our baby to arrive. I traveled to Texas for our scheduled delivery. We had a beautiful, seven-pound, fifteen-ounce boy.

That was the beginning of our life as a family. Unplanned, absolutely. But, by God's grace, He turned our hearts back to Him. We decided to choose life for our son, and plan for our future together as husband and wife. So, although we had an unplanned pregnancy, we didn't have a crisis pregnancy because we created a family.

## **Choosing a Life Together**

So, by God's grace, this part of my story has a very happy ending. It seems that nurse who told Yvette that she'd never graduate from Princeton with a baby was right. Yvette didn't graduate with just one baby, she graduated with two.

Yvette came back to school in her junior year. Toward the beginning of her senior year, we got pregnant again with our second son, Justin. Yvette delivered Justin just a few weeks before her senior thesis was due. Within two weeks she had two big due dates and met them both! There's an amazing picture of

Yvette carrying Justin at her graduation. A photographer was there, and he captured the shot of her with our little guy strapped on through the whole ceremony. That's not something you see at Princeton graduations very often.

When someone suggests an abortion, it's often based on the premise that nothing good can come from the birth of the child. The child is a net negative for the mother, the family, and society at large. But the nurse was wrong about Yvette's future career. She did go on to become a medical doctor. In fact, she was the chief resident of her program (though she's far too humble to ever tell you that). She's been practicing medicine for more than thirty years now.

I am reminded of the adage that anyone can tell you how many seeds are in an apple, but only God can tell you how many apples are in a single seed. That's why it's so dangerous for us to try and control life by deciding who should and should not live based on our limited perception. The baby they wanted us to throw in a trash can, our firstborn son, went on to graduate from Harvard. Also, we have a beautiful granddaughter, a blessing we would have missed if Yvette had followed the nurse's advice.

Unexpectedly, the narrative of my story became tied to my fatherhood story. I earned a master of business administration degree from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business and worked for large corporations including IBM, PepsiCo, and Goldman Sachs. However, I could never shake the nudge that God had work for me to do that would directly connect to the decision Yvette and I made to have the baby, and the decision I made to be a husband and a father.

About twenty years after our first son was born, I had the opportunity to lead the National Fatherhood Initiative and work in innovative ways to inspire other men to be the best dads they can be. At the same time, God graciously gave me the perfect space to work through my own issues related to being raised without my dad.

In 2012, I came to Care Net, a national Christian ministry that offers compassion, hope, and help to women and men at risk for abortion, ready to learn, grow, and ask questions. As I look back on my life, I can see how God connected the dots and led me to this place and this work. My passion for the life issue stems from my own story and observations of the challenges addressing this difficult issue. Consequently, with God's leading, I've developed

a somewhat novel approach to addressing the abortion issue. I believe this approach, through the power of God's Holy Spirit, has tremendous power to transform hearts and lives on the issue of abortion.

That said, I know exactly what it's like to be confronted with that moment—that moment when you must choose life and the choice feels daunting, heavy, and uncertain. It's easy to say what you'd do when confronted with that decision. But a whole different paradigm exists when you're the one in the position to make it. I knew the so-called easier way out. Yet, deciding to be a husband to Yvette and a father to our children was the best decision I could have ever made. I thank God that He gave me the grace and perspective to do that as a twenty-year-old. Now, I hope to encourage others who face the same difficult decision to follow a similar path.

I also hope to encourage you. Even if you're far beyond the childbearing years, even if making your own "life decision" is something you've never faced or never will face, you need to know what an important role you play in helping others choose life.

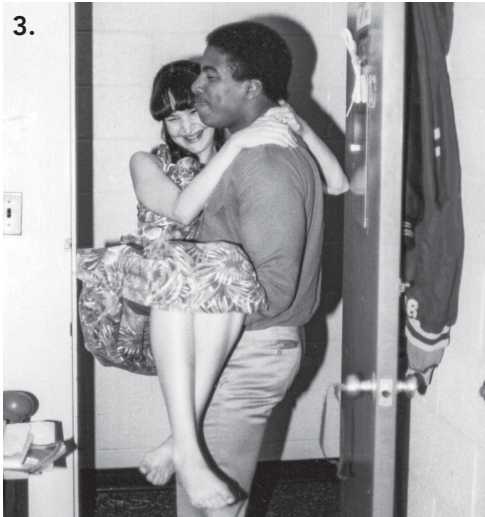
Our life stories are never wasted, because God is the perfect author. Who could have ever guessed that the guy who got his girlfriend pregnant in college would someday, forty years later, be working to help other women and men choose life? As they say, "God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called."

SAMPLE CHAPTER



1. We got married in Princeton by a justice of the peace with a few student friends present. This is our only wedding picture. I don't know where I am looking...

2. Yvette at 19 years old – Godly, Smart, Beautiful, and Courageous!



3. After our wedding, I carried Yvette over the threshold of our new home...her dorm room.

4. Yvette in the procession to get her diploma at her Princeton graduation ceremony. A photographer saw her and took this picture. We were not trying to "go viral" or make news. Our second son, Justin, needed to eat so she strapped him on!

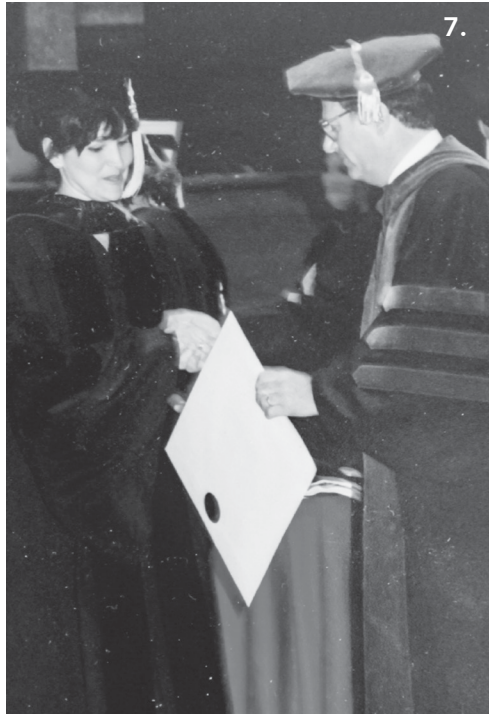


**Starting school early**

Justin Lopez-Warren, 2-months old, might not recall his first day at school, but his mom, Yvette, 23, certainly will. She carried him to her graduation ceremony at Princeton yesterday.



SAMPLE CHAPTER



5. I love this picture. It's from one of our first official dates.

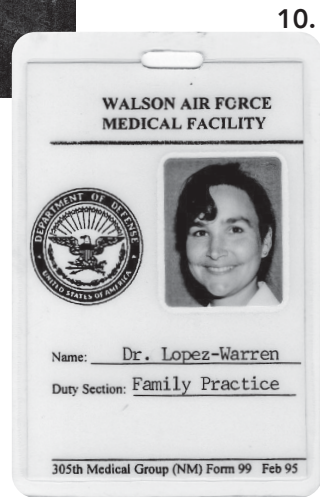
6. Well, the nurse who encouraged Yvette to have an abortion was right about one thing. Yvette didn't graduate from Princeton with a baby. She graduated with two. Justin was born about a month or so before she graduated. She is truly an amazing woman!

7. Yvette graduating from medical school. An amazing accomplishment. Nothing is impossible with God.



8. We renewed our wedding vows on our tenth anniversary. I loved seeing Yvette in a wedding dress. Beautiful.

9. Yvette in her medical residency during her obstetrics rotation delivering her first baby. She has been a family practice doctor for nearly thirty years.



10. After her medical residency, Yvette joined the Air Force and rose to the rank of Major. She was even selected as medical provider of the year for the entire base!

11. Forty-two years of marriage and counting. God is good!

