
on her... To tell a woman that abortion is wrong is judgmental. It follows that abortion counselling must be non-directive and non-judgmental so that a woman makes her own decision – one with which she feels able to live.’⁸

In what way does the counselling offered by Guildford Pregnancy Counselling Service differ from pro-choice counselling described above? LIFE is sadly mistaken in its claim that non-directive counselling is pro-life. The truth is that non-directive counselling is an essential ingredient of the pro-choice movement. LIFE, by its claim, has blurred the distinction between pro-choice and pro-life.

According to LIFE’s Chief Executive, Martin Foley, ‘We are a national educational and caring charity with no religious affiliation... Our argument against abortion is grounded in humanist principles and ideas of justice and human rights.’⁹ This is a serious matter for those Christians who support LIFE—they must examine their conscience to see whether they can continue to support an organisation that has based its counselling on the tenets of secular humanism. Those pro-life people who would be faithful to Scripture have a lot to think about.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*, (pages 23, 24)
- 2 Allan Guttmacher Report on Public Policy, Vol 7 Number 3, August 2004
- 3 fpa Abortion statement February 2004
- 4 Marie Stopes press release 21/2/2002. Marie Stopes Reproductive Choices launches new poster campaign warning women of ‘bogus’ pregnancy advice centres
- 5 The Oxford Student – Official Student Newspaper, 20 December 2005
- 6 CARE Centres Network website, Making a decision
- 7 Life Pregnancy Care Service Guildford, website
- 8 ES Williams, *What is going on in Christian Crisis Pregnancy Counselling?* The Wakeman Trust & Belmont House Publishing, 2005, p29
- 9 *Guardian*, 28 March 2006, letter, ‘Extreme actions cloud abortion debate’

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LIFE and Non-directional Counselling

A critique of the article

How Directional is Non-directional counselling?

(LIFE News, Issue 52)

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How Directional is Non-directional counselling?

(LIFE News, Issue 52) by ES Williams

LIFE is a pro-life organisation that is proud of its non-directional counselling for pregnant mothers who may be considering an abortion. This is the key message to emerge from the article *How Directional is Non-directional counselling?* in the recent LIFE News (Issue 52). Written by LIFE's new Director of Caring, the article aims to convince the reader that non-directional counselling is entirely consistent with a pro-life position on abortion. It starts by referring to the definition of counselling used by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy. '*Counselling is a way of enabling choice or change or of reducing confusion. It does not involve giving advice or directing a client to take a particular course of action.*' According to this definition, the purpose of counselling is to enable choice, or what we might call pro-choice. The article does not mention that the Association's theoretical base 'is typically humanistic, psychodynamic, cognitive or behavioural'.

LIFE and Carl Rogers

The article then explains that LIFE's non-directional counselling is based on Gerard Egan's model of skilled helping and Carl Rogers' theory of person-centred therapy. It is important to understand that Carl Rogers, the father of non-directive counselling, was a committed humanist who rejected the biblical doctrine of original sin, believing that at a basic level human beings are good and trustworthy. In 1964 he was elected humanist of the year by the American Humanist Association.

His counselling method was called 'non-directive' because he believed that the counsellor should not offer the client any advice but rather help him or her uncover and express their true feelings. Rogers felt that the client was the one who should say what is right or wrong—if something

without pressure from an outside party. The *available opportunities* can be examined dispassionately, with the *client* free to follow *her own wishes*. If a *client* chooses to keep her baby we can offer support in many different ways according to circumstances. Should her choice be abortion, we are available to help with any resulting trauma she may suffer, at any time in the future.'⁷ [italics added]

Note that LIFE refers to the expectant mother as a 'client'. The key message is that the 'client' will be helped to examine the '*available opportunities*' dispassionately, so that she is '*free to follow her own wishes*'. The inference is that abortion is an '*available opportunity*', something that the woman is free to choose if that's what she wants. The 'client' is helped to do what she wishes with her pregnancy, what she feels to be right in her own eyes, '*without any pressure from an outside party*'. In this way, the abortion scene is sanitised—it is no longer the killing of the unborn child, but a 'client' making the most of her '*available opportunities*'. Scripture warns that 'there is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death' (Proverbs 14:12).

Here we see, in the cold light of day, that the main objective of LIFE's non-directive counselling is to help the expectant mother do what she wants with her pregnancy. Moreover, she can dispassionately choose abortion, without fear, guilt or anger. This is damnable advice, for it suggests that there is no God to whom she is accountable and no moral law by which she will be judged. In effect, LIFE's non-directive counselling is discussing abortion with its 'clients' as if there are no moral consequences.

Pro-choice non-directive counselling

In *What is going on in Christian Crisis Pregnancy Counselling?* I describe the features of *pro-choice* counselling:

'According to pro-choice counselling there is no moral distinction between the three options (parenting, adoption, abortion), and therefore a woman must decide for herself which option is right for her and it does not matter which she chooses. Only the woman can decide what is best for her, what is right in her eyes, and nobody must interfere with her decision. It is wrong for anyone to attempt to persuade her against abortion – it is wrong for anyone, and especially a pregnancy counsellor, to try to force their moral beliefs

In what way does LIFE's non-directional counselling differ from the non-directional counselling of the pro-choice organisations mentioned above? The answer is that there is no difference—they are one and the same thing.

Is it harmful to warn that abortion is wrong?

Turning again to the statement that *'in being non-directional the counsellor is, in fact, being truly loyal to her pro-life principles in a non-harmful way'*, we note the inference that directive counselling, which explains to an expectant mother that abortion is wrong, is potentially harmful. But Scripture gives the strongest possible warning that abortion is wrong—God hates hands that shed innocent blood (Proverbs 6:17). Is biblical wisdom harmful? The truth is that non-directive counselling is harmful, for it does not warn the woman of her great moral danger; it is also cruel, for it does nothing to save the life of the unborn child. Because God is holy, righteous and compassionate He cares for the unborn child and therefore hates hands that shed innocent blood.

LIFE's public declaration that non-directional counselling is pro-life has devalued the meaning of the term 'pro-life'. There is no longer any real difference between LIFE's 'pro-life', non-directive, non-judgemental, options counselling and the non-directive, non-judgemental, options counselling of the 'pro-choice' movement. For an organisation that offers counselling under the pro-life banner not to warn that terminating the life of the unborn is wrong, is to make 'pro-life' a meaningless slogan. The pro-life message of Scripture is that we should do all we can to protect the innocent unborn.

The statement that *'people are intrinsically good'* rejects the biblical doctrine of original sin and places LIFE firmly in the camp of secular humanism. Is this why it sees no difference between pro-life and pro-choice?

LIFE's Pregnancy Care Service

What does LIFE's approach to counselling mean in practice? The Guildford Pregnancy Counselling Service explains LIFE's counselling service to its prospective clients:

'An unexpected pregnancy can bring endless problems. At LIFE, trained volunteers offer a sounding board for possible resolutions of these problems, enabling a *client* to reach *her own decision*

feels right, it probably is. Rogers accepted no moral authority outside of himself and his experience. He wrote, 'Experience is, for me, the highest authority... Neither the Bible nor the prophets—neither Freud nor research – neither the revelations of God nor man – can take precedence over my own direct experience.'¹ This view of authority leads to a moral relativism where each person is free to decide their own moral standards. In Rogers' psychological worldview there is no place for the moral law of God, and no moral absolutes. So Rogers' non-directive counselling helps a woman contemplating abortion to find her own solution to the problem of her unwanted pregnancy. The Scriptures, on the other hand, warn that those who followed the counsels and dictates of their own evil hearts, and not the moral law of God, face the judgement of God (Jeremiah 7: 24).

LIFE's non-judgemental approach

LIFE's article continues: *'For the client to flourish, counsellors should be non-judgmental and provide an empathic understanding of the client. At its heart lies the fundamental belief that people are trustworthy and instinctively know right from wrong.'* A LIFE counsellor helps a terrified woman with an unexpected pregnancy to *'consider what an abortion really is'*. She can explore, in safety, how she *'could continue the pregnancy or place the baby for adoption. The short and long-term consequences of every option are explored: good and bad.'* Clearly, the good and bad consequences of every option include the good and bad consequences of abortion. Here LIFE needs to explain what they believe are the good consequences of the abortion option.

As we saw above, LIFE claims that a non-judgemental approach helps the client to flourish. But in what way does non-judgemental counselling help the unborn child to flourish? The answer is not at all, for how can an approach that fails to warn of the evil of abortion help the unborn child? A LIFE counsellor discusses, in a non-judgemental way, the pros and cons of each option, being careful not to indicate any preference between the options. *'Do counsellors (as mere humans!) have the right to judge another person?'* Of course not! But the real question is does God have the right to judge the woman who aborts her unborn child? The answer is again obvious, for the Scriptures warn that God hates hands that shed innocent blood and declare that God will judge every person

according to their actions. ‘I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight, says the Lord’ (Jeremiah 9:25).

While a LIFE counsellor ‘*of course hopes that a client will decide against abortion*’, the counsellor does not ‘*tell her what to do or show her pictures of aborted children*’ as to do so is ‘*likely to cause immediate confusion, fear, guilt and anger*’. Yes, indeed—an expectant mother who is considering aborting her unborn child is likely to feel fear, guilt and anger when she understands the consequences of breaking God’s moral law. Indeed, she may feel so guilty and so fearful that she will change her mind. But the aim of non-directive counselling is to help a woman make her choice, whether to abort or not, without fear, guilt or anger. And in what way does a LIFE counsellor’s secret ‘hope’ that a client will decide against abortion, without an explanation of why abortion is wrong, help the woman or her unborn child?

LIFE’s non-directive, non-judgemental approach is built on the idea that ‘*no woman actually wants an abortion*’, and ‘*that people are intrinsically good and naturally seek right from wrong*’. Here we should note that LIFE’s belief in the intrinsic goodness of human nature is consistent with the teaching of Carl Rogers and in direct opposition to the Christian doctrine of original sin. The Christian faith teaches that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23); that the human heart is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

Non-directive counselling and pro-choice

LIFE claims that ‘*in being non-directional the counsellor is, in fact, being truly loyal to her pro-life principles in a non-harmful way*’. This statement asks us to believe that non-directional counselling is pro-life. Really? Why then do pro-choice, pro-abortion organisations, like British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS), the FPA and Marie Stopes International all adopt non-directional counselling? The pro-choice Allan Guttmacher Institute produced a report outlining professional standards for pregnancy counsellors in the USA that stressed the importance of non-directive counselling:

Federal regulations require pregnancy counselors to ‘offer pregnant women the opportunity to be provided with information and

counseling regarding each of the following options: prenatal care and delivery; infant care, foster care, or adoption; and pregnancy termination.’ If such information and counseling is requested, counselors must ‘provide neutral, factual information and non-directive counseling on each of the options, and referral upon request, except with respect to any option(s) about which the pregnant woman indicates she does not wish to receive such information and counseling.’ DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) also elaborates that ‘nondirective’ means that counselors ‘may not steer or direct clients toward selecting any option.’²

It is not difficult to see that LIFE’s counselling model is consistent with the non-directive counselling standards produced by the Allan Guttmacher Institute. The following examples illustrate the way in which pro-choice organisations in the UK have embraced the concept of non-directive counselling:

The Family Planning Association (fpa) believes that ‘all women who want it should have access to free *non-directive pregnancy counselling* and post abortion counselling.’³

Marie Stopes International provides ‘non-judgemental and *non-directive counselling*’.⁴

The Oxford Student is pro-choice and a strong advocate of non-directive counselling. ‘It doesn’t matter whether you are pro-life or pro-choice: counselling should be impartial, objective and *non-directional*.’ A trained peer supporter explains: ‘Our job is to help people to work through problems by examining all available options open to them and to provide as much support as we can. The conclusions people come to must truly be their own, and they must never feel judged or pressurised in making difficult decisions.’⁵

CARE (Christian Action, Research and Education) stresses that its counselling is impartial, non-judgemental and non-directive. The CARE Centres Network website explains: ‘Trained advisors are trained in *non-directional* counselling, enabling you to discover more clearly how you feel about the situation you are in.’⁶