

Abortion: Healing The Pain

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This is dedicated to Ann, Amy and the many who have had abortions and found God's peace.

My heart goes out to you if you are living with the pain and the guilt of having had an abortion. Please know that I am not writing to condemn, but to offer hope. Obviously, I can't undo what has already been done, but as a chaplain I do understand emotional pain. My goal is not to rip the scab off an open wound, but rather to bring some healing and closure.

There is a life principal: *we cannot change or heal what we do not acknowledge*. My guess is that I don't need to tell you that you made an awful mistake. Your conscience has told you that thousands of times. While modern psychiatry can do wonders, the one thing it cannot do is absolve one of true guilt. Only God can do that. Sweeping our past under the carpet and pretending it didn't happen doesn't work. When we bury and repress our feelings we don't bury them dead, we bury them alive. If we don't deal with them now, we are certain to deal with them later. The pain we cause ourselves by avoiding the truth, in the long run, is always greater than the pain we would have caused ourselves had we faced the truth in the first place.

Numerous women have confided in me that they have had abortions. Often they weep as they tell of the guilt, the loss, the regrets, feeling tricked, etc. Later in life, as they look at their healthy children, they realize there is one missing. At Christmas there should be presents under the tree for one more child. A close friend of mine had an abortion at age 16, and in the process her uterus was damaged and she cannot have children. She feels double grief. While every act of sin is forgivable, unfortunately the effects of some sins are not erasable.

I understand that nearly 25% of all women attending churches in the United States have had an abortion. If you are one of these women you may feel unimaginable pain and remorse when you hear pro-life messages about the sanctity of life, and how all born and unborn children are created in the image of God. Who can you tell? Who will understand? In some congregations abortion has become like an unpardonable sin along with divorce.

Do I condone abortion? No. I am strongly pro-life. But, I also know a Savior who is big enough to forgive *all* our sins, even the sin of abortion. According to scripture, whenever the Lord shows us our sin, it is always in light of the cross. When God speaks to our consciences, he does so, not to condemn, but to bring us to a place where we are willing to repent (admit our sin and turn from it) and receive his forgiveness (See: Romans 2:4; 5:6-11.)

By way of comfort, there are a couple of things you need to know. First, rest assured, the child you aborted is in Heaven. Jesus said, concerning children, "...of such belong the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 19:14). David, upon the death of his baby, said that one day he would see his child again (II Samuel 12:23). Secondly, God longs to forgive you (II Peter 3:8).

Once, when I was chaplain at a psychiatric hospital, I was playing pool with a teenage boy who had been heavily involved in Satanism. Suddenly he stopped, looked intently at me, and asked, "*Do you think God can ever forgive me because I was present when we killed a baby?*"—My heart hit the floor, and then

I believe God gave me an answer. I told him that if God was big enough to forgive us for the death of Christ, then God was certainly big enough to forgive him for the death of that baby. We talked, he renounced Satanism, he asked God to forgive him, and he invited Jesus Christ to become his Savior.—I truly believe God answered his prayer.

Concerning God's mercy and ability to forgive the *big* sins, do you know that three of the main writers of scripture, Moses, David, and the apostle Paul, were each guilty of murder or being an accomplice to murder?—Moses killed an Egyptian. David had an affair with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed. And, Paul, before his conversion, was there when Stephen was stoned. Question: was God able to forgive each of them? Of course. While they could never erase what they had done, they were each forgiven and were used mightily of God. With God there is *always* hope and forgiveness. The real question is, have you been forgiven?

Concerning forgiveness, the story is told of a woman who received a phone call from the emergency room of a hospital late one night stating that her dad might be dying. She hastily threw on some clothes, and began frantically driving the 200 miles to where her father was. As she was going through one small town, she looked in her rear view mirror, and there was a police car chasing her. Because she was going so fast, the officer didn't merely give her a ticket, he arrested her. The next morning she appeared before the county judge. As he looked at the officer's report, he said, "*Lady, what were you thinking? Do you realize you were going 50 miles above the speed limit? Your fine is either \$300 or three days in jail.*"

The woman said, "*Oh no, your honor, you don't understand. I can't spend three days in jail. My father is dying, and I'm sorry, but I left in such a hurry that I left my purse on the kitchen counter. I have no money.*" The judge said, "*I'm sorry too, because the law says you must pay \$300 or spend three days in jail!*"

The woman was crushed and began to weep. For some reason it touched the old judge's heart. To the surprise of everyone in the court, he stood up, stepped down from the bench, walked over, took off his robe, put on his sports coat, walked around in front of the bench, pulled out his checkbook, wrote a check for \$300, and laid it on the bench. Then he walked back around, took off his sports coat, put his robe back on, and resumed his seat. He said, "*Ma'am, the law says you must pay \$300 or spend three days in jail, but I see that someone has paid the fine for you. Case dismissed!*"

In essence, that is what God did for us. The Bible says that the penalty for sin is death [Romans 6:23]. When we stood condemned, without hope, God took off his robe of deity, put on a robe of humanity, became a man in the person of Jesus Christ, and died to pay a fine we could never pay [Romans 5:8]. According to scripture, Jesus has two natures: one human, the other divine [John 14:1-9; Philippians 2:6,7; Romans 1:3,4]. If we accept his offer of forgiveness, when we stand before God as Judge, we will be standing before the one who loved us and paid the fine for us: "*Case dismissed! I see that someone has paid the fine for you.*" [John 5:22].

If you know you need forgiveness, and/or you have never received Jesus as your Savior, I invite you to pray the following prayer from your heart. God knows your heart, and he promises to hear and forgive you if you will humbly ask for mercy and forgiveness. (See: Luke 18:9-4; I John 1:9; 5:11-14.) Isn't it about time to leave this sin, and all your sin, at the foot of the cross?

"Dear Lord Jesus, I thank you that you love me and that you died for all my sins. I am so sorry for the ways I have sinned against you. Forgive me for the pride, the fear, the rebellion, and the sin which has kept me from you, and please forgive me for the abortion(s) I had. As best as I know how, right now, I invite you to come into my life. I place my life in your hands, and from this day forward I chose to live for you. Make me the woman you want me to be. Heal my wounded heart. May I know your love and tender mercy. Thank you for hearing this prayer. Amen."

If you really meant that prayer, know that God has forgiven you. I encourage you to read Psalm 51, the psalm where David confessed his sins of adultery and murder to God. God's mercy was there for David, it will be there for you too. Having received God's forgiveness, there are a couple of healing steps I think you will find helpful.

Several years ago at a seminar dealing with spiritual and emotional healing, there was a young woman in a great deal of emotional pain. When she was six years old her three year old sister became sick and died.

Her parents told her, “*God took her.*” Even though she knew it was irrational, this woman said she had been mad at God for 30 years for *stealing* her sister.

As part of the healing process I had her hold a pillow. I said, “*I want you to pretend this pillow is your baby sister.*” As she held the pillow she began to weep. I told her, “*When something is taken from you, you feel like you’ve been robbed. But, if you give something to someone, as a present, you don’t feel robbed.*”—I then told her that I would like her to symbolically lift the pillow and give God her sister. With tears running down her cheeks she lifted the pillow up toward heaven. I then took the pillow away from her and she burst into sobs. I said, “*Now wait a minute, it isn’t over.*” I then took her hands and folded them across her heart. I said, “*Will you allow God to give you back your sister to hold in your heart?*” Again she cried, but this time with tears of joy.

I then had her cup her hands, like one cups water, and I said, “*I want you to pretend to put all the anger, the fear, the rage, the unforgiveness, the pain—everything your feeling—put it into your hands and feel how heavy is it.*” She admitted it was exceedingly heavy. I then pulled a young man in the group over to her and said, “*I want you to pretend for a minute that he is God.*” I then had the man cup his hands under hers. I told her, “*When you can, I want you to open your hands and dump all your feelings into God’s hands for these feelings are too heavy for you to carry.*” As she symbolically did this, the young man, whose face was filled with incredible tenderness and compassion, instinctively grabbed her hands, and a big tear rolled down his cheek. Later, she said, it felt like she had been looking into the very face of God.

May I encourage you to give your unborn child(ren) to God. Allow God to give you back your child(ren) to hold in your heart, until you can see your child(ren) face to face in Heaven.

Next, symbolically cup your hands and place in them all of the pain, the shame, the guilt, the anger, the unforgiveness, and all the losses you’ve felt. Imagine that God’s hands are under yours, and dump all these feelings into his hands, for they are too heavy for you to carry. (Read: I Peter 5:7 and Matthew 11:28-30.)

Lastly, as you begin to make personal peace with your past, please become involved in some sort of pro-life outreach or crisis pregnancy center. Possibly you can counsel other women against having an abortion. Try to find a Christian woman you respect, or possibly your pastor, and share the statistic that 25% of most women in churches today have had abortions. Let him/her know that you are willing to confidentially talk to others who have had abortions, and that you would like to share with them the liberating message of God’s grace. As scripture says, “*Confess your sins one to another, and pray for one another that you may be healed.*” (James 5:16). I believe this is one of the ways God has chosen to heal his hurting children.

Remember God’s mercy toward Moses, David, and Paul. Just as God used them, God can forgive you and use you to touch others. Lastly, may the pain of losing your child help you better understand God’s pain in the loss of his Son for you.

May his grace and peace be yours.

