

The Post-Abortion Review

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Illegal Abortions: The Myth and the Cure

Below the pictures of bloody coat hangers are red stenciled letters: “We won’t go back.” It is both a challenge and a warning. For many, it is the cause of moral paralysis. For such people, the fear of women dying in filthy back alleys is the primary reason they accept legalized abortion.

Polls show that while 80 percent of Americans agree that abortion is killing a human life, most also believe abortion should be legally accessible, at least in some cases. Many of these people accept abortion as an “evil necessity.” Others tolerate it as an “unavoidable evil.” They buy into the assumption that without “safe and legal” abortions, desperate women will foolishly seek out dangerous and illegal abortions. Since abortion can’t be stopped, they argue, why put women’s lives at risk?

This is a compelling argument. So compelling, in fact, that it has become the central argument in efforts to promote permissive abortion laws in developing countries.

In Africa, South America and Asia, population controllers are replicating the tactics used to legalize abortion in Europe and North America. They manufacture exaggerated claims about the frequency of illegal abortions and the number of women dying. They plead on behalf of struggling women who are “burdened” with an endless stream of “unwanted” children.

They claim that no law can stop these desperate women from choosing abortion. The problem is too big. The demand of the people is too great. The only way to protect women from “unsafe” abortions is to respect their “reproductive rights” and make abortion legal and safe—and preferably free, funded by the state.

If pro-lifers want to contain the spread of legalized abortion, much less reverse pro-abortion laws, we must have a solution to the problem of illegal abortions. At the same time, we need to show that the “solution” of legalizing abortion is no solution at all. We must show that legal abortion only increases the pain, suffering and exploitation of women. We must show that the “cure” is far worse than the disease.

Illegal vs. Legal Abortion: The American Experience

In my book *Aborted Women, Silent No More*, an entire chapter examines what is known about illegal abortions prior to *Roe v. Wade* and how they compare to the dangers of legal abortion today.

While there is not room to reexamine all that material here, I will quickly review some of the most important points.¹

- Prior to legalization, 90 percent of illegal abortions were done by physicians. Most of the remainder were done by nurses, midwives or others with at least some medical training. The term “back alley” abortion referred not to where abortions were performed, but to how women were instructed to enter the doctor’s office after hours, through the back alley, to avoid arousing neighbors’ suspicions.

- Pro-abortionists claimed that “five to ten thousand women die from illegal abortions every year.” This pseudo-fact was much repeated by the media. Abortion proponents like former abortionist Dr. Bernard Nathanson knew this figure was false but considered it to be “useful” in their public relations campaign. Even Planned Parenthood’s own leading statisticians admitted that the official statistics on deaths resulting from illegal abortion were

very accurately reported prior to 1973. In 1972, there were only 32 maternal deaths related to illegal abortion, not the thousands proclaimed by pro-abortionists.

- Deaths from illegal abortions were already declining or leveling off prior to 1973. After legalization, this trend remained unchanged. Deaths eliminated from the illegal abortion column were replaced by deaths resulting from legal abortion.

- The number of women dying from legal abortions is probably several times what it was when abortion was illegal. For many compelling reasons, deaths resulting from illegal abortion were accurately reported on death certificates. Independent studies have confirmed this. But ever since 1973, whenever a legal abortion results in a maternal death the underlying cause is often, and perhaps usually, ignored or disguised on death certificates.

This occurs for many reasons: to spare the surviving family members embarrassment, to limit liability exposure, to avoid tarnishing public perceptions of abortion, and simply because the death is no longer related to a criminal activity.

Independent studies have confirmed the fact that the official statistics on maternal mortality following legal abortions are woefully inaccurate. Most recently, a single researcher examining public records was able to document 50 percent more deaths related

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practiced with the
ethics of the back alley.**

to legal abortion than had been reported in the “official” government reports.² The researcher, Kevin Sherlock, insists that even his efforts have uncovered only a small fraction of these misclassified abortion related deaths.

- Pro-abortionists claimed that there were one million illegal abortions performed each year. This was another made-up number intended to shock the public with the “overwhelming” dimensions of this unstoppable problem. Scientific estimates based on known deaths and complications related to illegal abortion show that the actual rate of illegal abortions was in the range of 60,000 to 200,000 per year.

- Surveys of women who sought illegal abortions at that time confirm this much lower estimate for the overall rate of illegal abortion. These surveys also showed that less than half of women who sought an illegal abortion actually persisted in obtaining one. In addition, among those women who did procure an illegal abortion, the reported rate of physical complications was almost identical to the complication rate related to legal abortions. This last fact is not surprising since most illegal abortions were already performed by physicians.

- Surveys of women seeking legal abortions confirm that only 6 to 20 percent would have considered seeking an illegal abortion if it was not legally available. This finding also confirms that legalization of abortion has replaced every illegal abortion that we sought to avoid with between *ten and fifteen* legal abortions.

- Any marginal improvements in the safety of legal abortions, as compared to illegal abortions, are more than offset by the astronomical increase in the number of women exposed to the inherent risks of induced abortion, legal or illegal. While the percentage of women dying from abortion is lower, the actual number of women dying has increased. The actual number of women suffering physical complications has increased. The actual number of women suffering psychological complications has increased. The suffering of women, men, and families has not been reduced by legalization; it has been increased.

- There are also many deaths which are indirectly caused by abortion. Women with a history of abortion are six times more likely to commit suicide. They are also more prone to substance abuse and other forms of risky behavior that may lead to death. They also have increased rates of breast and cervical cancer. In addition, approximately 100,000 women each year will lose a planned baby to spontaneous miscarriage as a direct result of reproductive damage caused by their prior induced abortions.

- Before legalization, abortion was primarily a vice of the more educated and affluent, particularly those married women who were “done” having children. Since legalization, women undergoing abortion are more likely to be young, less educated and less affluent. In this regard, legalized abortion has helped population controllers successfully target a greater number of “lower class” babies for destruction.

- Before 1973, women could better resist the pressure from others to abort an unplanned pregnancy on the grounds that abortion was illegal, unsafe, and immoral. After legalization, it is easier for families and boyfriends to insist that because abortion is legal it must be “safe,” and because it is “socially approved,” it must

be moral. Legalization makes it easier to pressure women into unwanted abortions. In my survey of 252 post-abortive women, more than half of the women had felt pressured into the abortion by others. These victims of coerced abortion represent a major portion of the increased abortion rate and are also the most likely to suffer the most severe psychological consequences after abortion.

More Abortions, Not Safer Abortions

As these basic facts illustrate, the claim that legalized abortion will save women from “unsafe abortions” is without merit. The basic flaw in this argument is the false assumption that a change in legal status can make safe a medical act that is inherently unsafe. It is also absurd to believe that legalizing abortion will not increase the abortion rate or expose a whole new group of women to the danger of being pressured into unwanted abortions.

Society has overlooked the fact that not a single study has ever been published which shows that abortion, for any given reason, actually benefits the physical, emotional, economic, or social health of women. Indeed, the available evidence shows that abortion is instead associated with a worsening of the physical, emotional, economic, and social well-being of women.

Legalized abortion has contributed to the feminization of poverty and increased dependency on welfare.³ Easy access to abortion has made it easier, not harder, for men to abandon their wives and girlfriends. In addition, women with a history of abortion are more likely to experience breast cancer, infertility, miscarriage, substance abuse, sleep disorders, sexual dysfunction, suicidal impulses, psychiatric hospitalization, and much more.

The only ones receiving any tangible benefit from legalized abortion

Every illegal abortion has been replaced by 10 to 15 legal abortions.

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This issue has been edited by David C. Reardon, Ph.D., Director of the Elliot Institute. Assistant Editor: Amy R. Sobie. Relevant submissions will be considered for publication but cannot be returned unless accompanied by a SASE. Direct requests for permission to reprint to: Elliot Institute, PO Box 7348, Springfield, IL 62791. © 1999 Elliot Institute, unless otherwise noted.

are not women, but rather, the elitist population controllers. Through the legalization of abortion, they have succeeded in reducing the birth rates among the “lower classes” and racial minorities, which was exactly their goal. But the cost to women has been tremendous.

The exploitation of women is made worse by the fact that abortion clinic counselors routinely withhold information about risks and alternatives from their patients. Deceptive business practices, negligence, and even sexual abuse of patients are well documented throughout the abortion industry.⁴ Kevin Sherlock, author of *Victims of Choice*, has accurately described the present situation with this memorable comment: “While abortion is legal, it is still practiced with the ethics of the back alley.”

The Cure

Clearly, the solution to the dangers of illegal abortions cannot be found in making it legal. Abortion is inherently dangerous.

If society truly wishes to prevent the injuries caused by illegal abortions, the solution is to find better ways to (1) help women faced with problem pregnancies and (2) prosecute and deter abortionists who perform illegal abortions.

The first step can be accomplished through increased support for problem pregnancy centers and public education. We can and must be able to provide women facing crisis pregnancies with the financial, physical, emotional and spiritual support they need and deserve.

We must also educate the public about the dangers of abortion—both legal and illegal—so that no woman would want an abortion and no truly compassionate person would attempt to recommend or pressure her into having one. And we must create a society where women who *are* being pressured will know where to turn for the help they need to resist that pressure.

The second step, deterring abortionists, can best be accomplished by passing laws that would allow women who undergo illegal abortions to sue the abortionist for reckless endangerment. This would also apply to any person or group who referred the woman to the abortionist or supplied her with material or advice with the intent of helping her to perform a self-abortion. In our model legislation, women exposed to such reckless endangerment would be entitled to a minimum award of \$400,000, even if they did not suffer any other injury.

Admittedly, such a statute would be a significant departure from existing law. Normally, when two people are involved in an illegal transaction, neither one can sue the other for any injuries that result from their illegal activities.

But the problem of illegal abortions is unique. Women seeking illegal abortions normally do so either under pressure from other people, or because they are desperate and ignorant of abortion’s risks. Abortionists who take advantage of women in these crisis situations are the real culprits and as such, should be held

accountable for their actions.

To stop dangerous abortions, our goal must be to arrest and convict abortionists. But we won’t succeed in this unless we give the women who are the victims of this exploitation the means and the motivation to testify against the abortionists in both criminal and civil liability trials.

Think about how this simple change in the law would bring an end to illegal abortions. If any “dissatisfied” customer can show up at an abortionist’s door not only with police officers who will press criminal charges against the abortionist, but also with a lawyer who will try to seize all the abortionist’s property, the abortion trade would stop instantly.

At first glance, a few people may imagine that such a law might actually encourage criminally-minded women to seek an abortion just for the opportunity to sue the abortionist. But this fear is exactly why no one would be willing to do an illegal abortion or to assist a woman in performing a self-abortion.

The only solution is to make abortionists fully liable for their actions.

When any woman, injured or uninjured, can sue abortionists for reckless endangerment, there will no longer be any escape from justice. Faced with civil liability for every abortion they perform or refer for, abortionists will be driven so far underground that women won’t be able

to find them in the first place. Conversely, any abortionists who can be found to do an abortion, can also be found to be sued and prosecuted.

In addition, the standard of proof in civil suits is lower than in criminal cases. Even if a prosecutor is unable to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused actually performed an abortion, it may be easier for a personal injury attorney, using the same evidence, to show that it was more likely than not that the defendant attempted an abortion.

This reform also makes good common sense. People who perform or encourage illegal abortions are clearly endangering women’s lives. Tough civil liability standards combined with a longer statute of limitations for filing suit (since the woman may be too ashamed to sue for many years) will be far more effective in deterring illegal abortions than merely criminal penalties.

The solution to “unsafe abortions” will never be found in making abortion legal. Instead, the only solution is to make abortionists fully liable for their actions.

-DCR

1. See David C. Reardon, *Aborted Women, Silent No More* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986) 281-310 for citations related to the following statements of fact.

2. Kevin Sherlock, *Victims of Choice* (Akron, OH: Brennyman Books, 1996), see also Mark Crutcher, *Lime 5* (Denton, TX: Life Dynamics, 1996) for details on how pro-abortion government officials have conspired to conceal abortion related deaths and injuries from the public.

3. David C. Reardon, “Abortion and the Feminization of Poverty” *The Post-Abortion Review* 1(3), Fall 1993.

4. See Reardon, *Aborted Women, Silent No More*; Crutcher, *Lime 5*; and Sherlock, *Victims of Choice* for hundreds of well documented examples.

In the Vineyard

Ann Vogel

Pro-life Christians—especially Catholics and Evangelicals—are often accused of being judgmental and insensitive to the needs of women. But the abortion proponents who make this accusation fail to realize that while the Church must boldly defend the truth and unmask evil wherever it is, its primary mission is to bring Christ’s forgiveness and healing to sinners. This is why true pro-life Christianity involves caring about women both before and after they have had an abortion.

Post-abortion ministries are a prime example of this mission. For those of us who have had abortions, it is encouraging to see the Church’s increasing efforts to reach out to us.

A large number of post-abortion programs are available to women around the country through pregnancy centers, churches, and independent post-abortion ministries. One such program is Rachel’s Vineyard, a weekend retreat designed to give women and men suffering from abortion a time for mourning, healing, and rejoicing. The retreats are held dozens of times each year around the country.

The “background” or theme of the retreat is meeting Christ in a Vineyard. The Vineyard is a safe place to share one’s story. The storyteller is free to express her anger, grief and pain. Each story is the same, and yet very different. The burden of the past is shared. For many women, this is the first time they have shared their story with anyone. Through this process the women no longer feel alone.

When I entered the Vineyard, I went thinking to observe and to safely keep my distance. I firmly believed that I had dealt with all the various components of my own abortion experience, and had nothing to personally gain from the weekend. I was going to write this article and be done with it. But I was wrong.

I had paid lip service to the idea that healing after abortion is a process. I had not anticipated the healing that was waiting for me. One of the hallmarks of the abortion experience is sealing away the emotions—the grief and despair associated with the act. I am one of those people who don’t deal well with emotion, and prefer to push it away. Unfortunately, the consequence of stuffing away all those intense feelings is that eventually they have to come out in some form. I was in for some healing of my own.

There are many tears. The Vineyard is a safe place to finally allow those tears to flow. It is a place where we could finally acknowledge and discuss the circumstances of our choices. We were allowed and encouraged to examine what exactly led to the decision.

This was important for me in that I resented the feeling of helplessness I had experienced during my pregnancy and abortion. I remembered how alone I felt as I frantically sought a solution to

my pregnancy. I was so frightened and angry. Not only at those around me, but also at the unborn child and most of all, at myself.

I remember castigating myself for being so stupid as to get in this situation in the first place. I felt that this was my problem, of my own making, and that any decision as to its outcome was mine as well. But at the same time, with all the ambivalence of a person in crisis, I was waiting for rescue. It never came, and that too made me very angry. Until I experienced this healing weekend, I never knew just how angry I was about that.

I was given the freedom and permission to express that anger. I wasn’t the only angry woman there—most of us were, at something or another . . . or someone or another. In my role as an observer, I saw many forms of anger worn on the faces or held in the voices of the other women there.

At this weekend, the babies we had aborted truly became our children. The grief of losing a child is overwhelming, regardless of the circumstances of the loss. During my earlier healing from abortion, I had named my son and

placed him in the arms of the Lord. But I still had not permitted myself to mourn him. That weekend my son was mourned as he deserved to be.

All of us met our children in very personal ways. The weekend gave each of us an opportunity to privately write to our lost ones, to speak to them, to weep for them. It gave each of us the opportunity for a private and intimate encounter with our children and our Lord.

We also had the opportunity to grieve the other losses we had experienced as a result of our abortions. Some of us carry permanent consequences from our abortions, the things no one told us to expect. At the retreat, we had an opportunity to express our pain over those consequences.

My very personal pain, and one consequence of my abortion, was a miscarriage several years after my abortion. Any healing and grieving I had done before was focused on Paul, my aborted son. But suddenly I felt the need to grieve for Kathryn, my miscarried daughter. I realized that in my quest for relief from the pain I felt inside that I had never really mourned her, much less acknowledged her as my daughter. I was too busy being angry with everyone else, including God.

There were many tears that weekend, but they were healing tears. Tears that really needed to be shed and let out of the dark corners of the heart where they had hidden themselves. Other women there had their own moments of insight. They were gently encouraged to allow themselves to acknowledge their feelings, then deal with them in healthy ways.

**The Vineyard
is a safe place to
share one’s story.**

We were permitted and encouraged to express our rage and pain over the failures and/or betrayals of others in our lives during our abortion decision. Then we were not only encouraged to forgive those involved in the decision, but ourselves as well—which is sometimes the most difficult part. Through this meeting with Christ in the Vineyard, memories of abandonment, pain, and confusion were replaced by reconciliation with those toward whom we harbored secret anger.

At the end of the weekend, we are able to lay our children to rest in the arms of Jesus. There was no condemnation. There was no shaming, aside from the shame that we had heaped on ourselves. When a woman leaves, she leaves her shame behind.

The weekend lasts from Friday night to Sunday evening, giving the participants ample opportunity to meet with our Lord. The atmosphere is warm and loving. Only first names are used, and privacy is strictly guarded.

At the end of the weekend the healing in many women was obvious. The very countenance of some of the women dramatically changed. Women who arrived angry and guarded left lighter, smiling. Women who arrived feeling betrayed and abandoned left secure in the love of the Lord. The transformation is amazing—and hard to describe.

We left with a sense of closure. Our past abortions are no longer the monster waiting in the shadows to spring out, seize us unaware, and drag us into the darkness. In the Vineyard, our abortions lost their power over us. We left the Vineyard, if not completely free of pain and regret, then well along the path of healing, and most importantly, living in a deeper relationship with the Lord.

Ann Vogel is a registered nurse and co-founder of Women at Risk / Women for Hope and Justice, an advocacy group of post-abortion women and their families. For more information on Rachel's Vineyard retreats, call 877-HOPE-4-ME.

Finding News You Can Use

Here are just a few sources for pro-life news and information through email and the Internet:

Email News Lists

Elliot Institute

Infrequent. Updates on the Elliot Institute and news releases related to post-abortion issues. Request by sending an email to elliot.instsubscribe@listbot.com or at our web site at www.afterabortion.org

American Life League

Weekly. Broad coverage.
Request by email to communicate@all.org.

Women & Children First

Daily. Broad coverage. Lots of pro-life political news. Include "subscribe" in header and body of email to infonetrequest@prolifeinfo.org

EPearls

Monthly. Broad coverage.
Request by email to johnwood@msn.com

Kaiser Daily Health Reports

Daily. Thorough update on wide variety of "reproductive issues." Pro-abortion, pro-population control slant, but very professional and does report many pro-life initiatives and reactions. Excellent for keeping track of "the other side." Sign up at www.kff.org/register/

Lutherans for Life

Request at lflldjj@nevia.net

On Line News Updates

Lifesite

www.lifesite.net

Pontifical Council for the Family

www.vinculumnews.com

ProLife ENews

www.interlife.org

OUR GREATEST NEED

He knew we longed for peace, but He did not come as a general.

He knew we longed for unity, but He did not come as a politician.

He knew we longed for wealth, but He did not come as an economist.

He knew we longed for knowledge, but He did not come as a scientist.

He knew we longed for laughter, but He did not come as an entertainer.

He could have blessed us in any of these ways, but He did not.

For He knew that our greatest need was for forgiveness, and so He came to be our Savior.



Book Review

Men and Abortion: A Path to Healing

by C.T. Coyle, Ph.D.

Published by Essence Publishing, 44 Moira St. W., Belleville, Ont., Canada K8P 1S3, (800) 238-6376, info@essence.on.ca, www.essence.on.ca. ISBN: 1-894169-87-5, \$12.95.

The impact of abortion on men is not widely understood or discussed. But opinion polls have shown that men are equally, or even more likely, than women to admit feelings of guilt and regret about a past abortion.

In *Men and Abortion: A Path to Healing*, psychologist Catherine Coyle describes her experience in forgiveness counseling with men struggling with a past abortion.

As the men were led through an “intervention program” designed to foster forgiveness toward both others and themselves, Coyle was able to measure a significant reduction in feelings of anger, anxiety, grief, and depression. The men were also significantly more self-forgiving and forgiving of the women who had aborted their children.

Coyle repeatedly emphasizes that forgiveness does not mean justifying or excusing the act of abortion. She writes:

“Forgiveness does not demand that we ignore justice. In fact, we must have an adequate sense of justice in order to recognize when we have been treated unfairly. Forgiveness involves both the recognition that an injustice occurred and a decision to respond to that justice with mercy.”

Clearly, forgiveness is an indispensable step in the experience of inner healing. This is true not only from an emotional perspective but most certainly from a spiritual perspective, as addressed in the chapter “Forgiveness: A Christian Imperative.”

Coyle skillfully uses the testimonies of several men to describe how her intervention program helps men to work through the process of forgiveness. In the latter half of the book, each chapter is concluded with a section called “Putting the Ideas into Practice,” which will help the reader work to privately address his own post-abortion experience.

While this book focuses mostly on the role of forgiveness in healing for men, her insights are certainly applicable to post-abortive women. Indeed, anyone who struggles with forgiveness over any experience would find valuable insights in this book.

This reviewer would recommend *Men and Abortion* as a resource for post-abortion counselors, but most especially as a gift for that man in your life—a husband, brother, cousin, son, or friend—who never talks about his own abortion loss. Coyle’s non-threatening, compassionate book may be exactly what he needs, even if he would never get it for himself.

-ARS

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relationship with my husband went downhill immediately. I now understand the rage and hurt he must have felt over my aborting his child without even telling him first. But I was just so wrapped up in my own hurts I didn't think about that then. We never talked about it.

He was abusive, and I accepted it. I would hear in my mind, "So what's your problem? At least he didn't kill you. You killed your baby!"

I wanted to die, but I was afraid of hell. I even felt guilty about not committing suicide: "You didn't have any problem killing your baby. Why get cold feet now? You deserve to die! You're not only a murderer, you're a coward!" I wanted to be in a coma. I guess I thought I could wake up in 50 years or so and be able to deal with it then.

Six years later, we were divorced. I had been stuffing my feelings down or anesthetizing them with alcohol so long, and wearing a mask and pretending for so long, that I felt numb. I remember getting out of the car to go into a grocery store one day and thinking, "I'm even just pretending to go to the store. I don't even exist." I felt like a zombie.

The abortion changed me in every way. I went from being an outgoing person who loved friends to being a hermit, not wanting to be close to anyone. I thought they would hate me if they really knew me. I became a heavy drinker—probably bordered on becoming an alcoholic. I ran from God and hated myself. I accepted abuse and felt humiliated over that, and all the while I had this gnawing emptiness. For 12 years I was in a state of non-growth—just existing.

I became a Christian while I was separated, shortly before my divorce. At that time, I asked God to forgive me for my abortion,

but I still felt so numb. I didn't cry about my baby or anything. I felt hard-hearted and unable to really confess. I wondered if I was really sorry, or just regretted what had happened to me.

I told a pastor about my abortion, but just in a list of things wrong. He didn't mention it again and neither did I. Then I saw a Christian counselor who tried to convince me that I was abused as a child (I wasn't) and we didn't deal with the abortion at all.

Three and a half years ago, I went through a support group that used *Women in Ramah*, a Bible study by Linda Cochran. I was finally able to face my abortion. I found God's promise to "take away my heart of stone and give me a living heart of flesh." I asked Him to do that for me and He did.

I finally was able to get over myself and think about my baby, come to love my baby, and then grieve for my baby. And I was really able to understand God's forgiveness—that all my self-punishment and misery could not atone for my abortion, that

there was nothing I could do to pay for it, that Jesus died on the cross for my abortion and all my other sins, and paid for my sins in full. God not only forgave all my sins, He brought me peace and joy. Real joy!

My baby's name is Callie Anna. Anna is the name God gave me, and it means grace. Now, when the "accuser" attacks, even my baby's name reminds me of God's grace and forgiveness. Doing the Bible study was the best thing I ever did for myself and I thank God for it.

Now that I have found healing and forgiveness, I am once more developing friends, and am able to serve God however He chooses to use me. I know God works everything for good, and I have seen Him use me to help others now. After working through my abortion, and seeing how very much God values each one of His creation, I am less critical of others, and tend to see all people as precious in God's sight.

My baby's name means "grace."

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I was 24 years old, and had recently had sex for the first time—outside of marriage. I had grown up in a Christian home and was already ashamed and ambivalent about my sexual relationship. Then I got pregnant right off the bat.

I had a pregnancy test at my ob./gyn. and she told me she didn't think I was pregnant. She thought I might have a tumor, because my uterus was enlarged. I "prayed" for cancer. But I turned out to be pregnant; I found out the next day.

I was panic stricken. I couldn't believe I was pregnant. I immediately blurted out, "I have to have an abortion." I had never even thought about it before, but that was the first thing that came to mind. I told my boyfriend I was pregnant, but we didn't discuss what to do. I left him just assuming I would have the baby.

I told no one else. I had asked my doctor for sleeping pills until I could have the abortion four days later; I don't think they worked. I didn't want to think; I just wanted to get it over with.

I wondered if my baby knew what I was planning. I talked to my baby and apologized. But mainly I just wanted it to be over. I thought I could cover my sin, erase the past few months, break off my relationship with the father, and start over—just as though none of it had ever happened.

My abortion was a cowardly, selfish decision. I saw it as my whole life being "over" if I stayed pregnant. I didn't even consider any other options. I chose myself over the baby.

I had a D&C abortion at a women's hospital in Washington, D.C., under general anesthesia. I was scared and upset, and when they came to put an IV in my arm I told them I didn't want to be put to sleep until I had seen my doctor. They told me it was just vitamins, but then put the anesthesia in anyway. So I don't know to this day

whether my own doctor (a woman) did the abortion, or one of the men who was standing there as I went to sleep. I just remember feeling the stuff in my arm, calling out "No!" and then I was out. I don't mean this to say I was going to change my mind about the abortion. I wasn't.

When I woke up in recovery, I asked if they would just tell me if it was a boy or a girl. A nurse harshly responded, "It's just tissue. There's no way to tell."

I took a cab to the hospital and took one home. I wanted to do it all by myself, so no one would know. I felt so alone.

I felt a huge, gaping hole, an emptiness, right away. I also felt terrible guilt. I turned away from God completely, because I could

not face Him with my abortion. I felt I had passed the point of no return—just gone too far. That was an unforgivable sin. And I had gone into it knowing that. It was sort of like I sold my soul.

I immediately began a pretense. I went back to work ("I was just a little under the weather last week," etc.) I tried hard not to think about it.

I did have to tell the baby's father. He was very hurt and upset, but he said he understood and he still wanted to marry me. I had planned to break it off, but now I thought that no one else would ever want me, and I had hurt him so much. So I married him.

My wedding was three days after my baby's due date. I pasted a smile on my face and pretended to be a happy bride, but I was thinking about my baby.

I began to drink a lot to be able to get to sleep, to not think. My

**I pretended to be
happy, but I was think-
ing about my baby.**

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Elliot

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