

Abortion...Is it Really Ever Over?

Tomorrow thousands will be in Washington, DC for the annual March for Life which is in response to the Roe v. Wade legalization of abortion. Ironically, some of those in attendance will be those mothers and fathers who now regret their past abortion decisions.

It is not uncommon for those around the abortion debate to change their minds. In fact Norma Leah McCorvey, the Roe in the Roe v. Wade (1973) case which actually legalized abortion, is now herself pro-life.

Abby Johnson, former 2008 Planned Parenthood Clinic Director of Year, is also now a pro-life activist. She personally had two abortions and later experienced the shock of watching an abortion of a 13 week old baby on an ultrasound monitor at her clinic. "Johnson, who previously believed fetuses could not feel anything while being aborted, says she saw the fetus squirming and twisting to avoid the vacuum tube which would be used to suck and destroy the fetus.[7]"

"For the briefest moment," she wrote in her memoir, *Unplanned*, "the baby looked as if it were being wrung like a dishcloth, twirled and squeezed. And then it crumpled and began disappearing into the cannula before my eyes. The last thing I saw was the tiny, perfectly formed backbone sucked into the tube, and then it was gone." [8]

Everyone's experience with abortion and its aftermath is different. Some apparently go through it seemingly undaunted. For others one of the biggest challenges is realizing "what is done is done." Sadly some of these ladies really never fully realized the implications of what they were really doing until it was too late. Nobody really knows how they are going to respond after an abortion. It is hard to know what may trigger a harsh dose of reality into a once buried secret.

As a therapist I have counseled issues surrounding abortion trauma beginning with my internship. I vividly remember a student rushing into my office panic stricken and telling me that she had just returned from driving a friend to have an abortion. The reality that she had helped someone end the life of her baby didn't fully hit her until she returned to the campus that day. You would probably guess that this was a state college, but sad to say abortions occur among students on Christian campuses too.

It is not uncommon for me to counsel with young mothers who regret the abortions they have had in their pasts when they finally do give birth. It is hard for them to imagine that they have another baby already in heaven as a result of their own decision or the forced decision of another. Sadly many were never given options such as crisis pregnancy centers and counseling.

Some of my clients are in their fifties and sixties before they have finally had the courage to share their secrets and finally begin the healing journey. Often times they have been married for years and their spouses and families have no clue. They have “suffered in silence” and many times feel spiritually doomed and haunted by their secret.

During individual counseling I encourage clients to accept God’s forgiveness and to forgive themselves. Often it is helpful for them to select a unisex name to acknowledge the aborted child and to plan a special symbolic tribute.

The opportunity to share their grief and pain in a group or with a trusted individual can be therapeutic as well. I regularly make referrals to local Rachel’s Vineyard retreats, rachel’svineyard.org. There are also tons of on- line resources to help with the healing journey. Most importantly, those suffering from the guilt and trauma of abortions need our love and prayers.