



“How can something that is a woman’s right hurt so much?”

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It was the weekend after my high school graduation and my friends and I went to the beach to celebrate. I remember it being one-big drinking frenzy; that was the weekend I lost my virginity.

Later that summer I met someone else at the beach and we started dating. That September I began college and my boyfriend would come to visit me every weekend. By early October I found myself waking up sick every morning. I tried to ignore all the classic signs.

Over Thanksgiving I went to Planned Parenthood to have a pregnancy test done. When I found out my test was positive, I thought it was my death sentence. You see, my parents had always hammered into me, “Don’t get pregnant before you’re married; and if you do, don’t come home!” I still remember how I felt after that phone call: I was in a state of something between shock and denial. I felt so alone and afraid; unable to trust anyone with my shameful secret. I told my boyfriend that I had no choice but to have an abortion. He wasn’t happy about my decision but agreed that I could do what I thought was best. In my desperation I thought only of myself.

On December 10, 1980, I traveled 45 miles to the nearest abortion clinic. When I arrived there were about 20 girls in the waiting room and most of them were just like me, very young and very frightened. After filling out the paper work and paying the \$250, I spoke to a clinic counselor who told me that an abortion was a simple procedure that would “take care” of my “problem” with no lasting impact. Little did I know or comprehend the lie that was being perpetuated upon me.

I’ll never forget the cold room, the doctor’s insensitive eyes staring at me from behind his mask or the sound of the noisy vacuum. For me, it was an extremely painful and emotional experience, which would haunt me for the next 20 years. *How can something that is a woman’s right hurt so much?*

When the procedure was over I knew one thing for certain, this would be my secret and I would never tell anyone. In response to the terror of this event I literally blocked out

the next 3 years of my life in an attempt to flee from the pain. Later, I met my husband and we had two children—I sought to move on with life but each December I dealt with deep feelings of depression.

In an effort to escape the lingering emptiness I found myself turning to unhealthy thoughts and behaviors. What is even worse is that when my conscience told me I was making a mistake, I willingly shunned these inner warnings.

By 2001 and I had finally reached rock bottom. It was at that time that my neighbor invited me to a spiritual renewal weekend at her church. During that weekend the Holy Spirit worked on my heart, bringing to the surface many of the destructive thoughts and emotions I had kept buried for so long. I realized that God’s love and forgiveness was available to me, and that I could experience reconciliation and hope through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Over the next few years I realized that God had forgiven all my sins but that I still held on to my past, unable to forgive myself for taking the life of my own child. It was then that God showed me I needed further healing. Through events that only God could orchestrate, I attended a Rachel’s Vineyard abortion recovery retreat. During this retreat weekend I encountered God in an intimate way and was able to fully embrace his forgiveness and finally make peace with my past choices, forgiving myself.

Since that time I have felt called to reach out to other women and men who are struggling with painful post-abortion emotions. I want them to know that they too can experience restoration, renewal and healing.

Mary Lee and her husband Wayne have been married for 24 years and have two children. For three years Mary Lee served as director of Hope Pregnancy Center in Killeen Texas while her husband served in the military. Upon his retirement they relocated to Northwest Houston where they actively serve in their church. Mary Lee has most recently become involved in volunteer training at the West Houston Pregnancy Help center. She is also involved with abortion recovery through leading Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat weekends and by serving as a certified facilitator for Surrendering the Secret and Forgiven and Set Free abortion recovery programs. Most recently Mary Lee was appointed as the Texas Southwest Region Leader for Operation Outcry, a ministry of the Justice Foundation. I decided to serve as a phone consultant with the National Helpline for Abortion Recovery in order to reach out to others who are suffering from a painful abortion experience.