



I got pregnant when I was nineteen. I hardened my heart and told myself it wasn't a baby, it was just a blob of tissue. I simply got an abortion and never cried about it. But a darkness entered my life, and I lived in fear, holding a horrible secret. I thought that if anybody knew, then they would not love me. I never spoke of it to anyone. I continued very far down that wrong road, having a second, then a third abortion. My third abortion even involved my future husband Jeff. Unspeakable.

Occasionally I tried to reassure myself with the thought that it was legal, and I reasoned that if a baby was involved, then doctors wouldn't do *that*. After all, the doctor who performed my first abortion was a woman, and she herself was eight months pregnant at the time. She had said to me, "Someday when you are married and have children they will thank you for this."

I hated myself. I could never even say the word *abortion* out loud. It was too awful. For almost ten years I suffered from a recurring nightmare in which I was in the ocean, floating peacefully in the warm water. Then suddenly I would be attacked and ripped apart by a shark.

During those years I married Jeff. Then our oldest son was born. As I held my precious newborn baby boy, a disturbing thought came to my mind: *When was Erik not Erik?* How could he be something else during the first trimester, but then become Erik in the second or third trimester?

My mom called at about that time and asked me, as she had long suspected, if I had ever gotten an abortion. Breaking into uncontrollable sobbing, I cried out, "Yes!" It was like a dam had burst, and a raging flood of agony, guilt, and shame poured forth.

"I still love you," she said. "Why don't you go get some help?"

I had been raised in the church, and I knew right from wrong. But I had turned my back on God when I went off to college and embraced what I called *freedom*. At that point in my life, I thought there must be a creator, but I did not believe in Jesus. Come on! All that stuff about miracles? Nobody believed that except little old ladies who were superstitious. I was college educated. I was too sophisticated for that.

But my mom was right. I needed help. I went to confession and started seeing a counselor. One night I was alone, sobbing on my knees at my bed. I was thinking that I was no different than a Nazi, an evil murderer. I was worse. I believed that I had committed the absolute worst possible sin in the universe—taking the life of my own child. I never understood the *Jesus part* before. The cross was a stumbling block. But now I was seeing the cross clearly for what it was—my salvation. Jesus died on that cross so that I could be forgiven.

So, I started going to church every Sunday. Then our daughter was born, and eventually, our third-born child, our youngest son. I knew a woman once who had an abortion. Later, after she married, she was never able to conceive. She had unknowingly aborted the only baby she would ever have. How is it that I was shown such mercy?

I believed I had been forgiven for my sin of abortion, yet I still felt there was unfinished business, although I did not know what it could be. Then someone in my prayer group gave me a special book. In this book I read about post-abortive women who went to a priest for confession. The priest would say to a woman, "Go home and ask the Lord to reveal to you the name of your aborted baby. Come back when you know the

name, and we will have a private funeral for your baby.” I knew immediately that this was my unfinished business!

One of the women in my prayer group lost her four-year-old son Sean in an accident. When I told Jeff about this, tears rolled down his cheeks. Sometime later I walked into our living room and saw Jeff sitting on the couch in tears.

“What's wrong?” I asked, very concerned.

“I think God just spoke to me. The thought just came into my mind that I'm not crying for Sean only, I am also crying for our own child who was aborted,” he choked out.

I began to cry also, and we held each other and wept *together* for the first time.

“What do we do?” Jeff asked.

A few days later, I had a vivid, horrible dream. I was looking down from above on a terrible scene. It was a circle of naked women kneeling prostrate with their heads bowed down and blood was flowing from each of them. It looked like a Satanic ritual. I knew immediately that these women had had abortions. Then I heard a voice say with sorrow “Poor Michael.” I wrote this dream down in my journal, thinking that it had revealed the name of my first baby. That evening, after our children were in bed, Jeff and I sat down to talk.

“Anne, there is something I have to tell you. A name came to my mind,” Jeff said.

“What?” I asked.

“Michael.”

I burst into tears. “Michael! I just had a dream about that name!”

I ran into our bedroom, got my journal, and showed him where I had recorded the dream. We were both stunned and overwhelmed and thankful and sobbing. This was *our* child, our son. The Lord had given us a sign that this was real and that he had actually revealed our baby's name to us.

We had a private funeral with a priest for Michael. During the Mass we read aloud our letters to Michael, asking him to forgive us, telling him that we loved him very much and that we would see him in heaven someday. The priest then prayed “Michael! Michael! Michael! Now you have a place in your home on earth also. You have a place in the hearts of your mommy and daddy.” Over the next year, I received the two other names, Matthew and Monica. We had funerals for them as well, and my husband Jeff spiritually “adopted” them as his own.

Later, one of the women in my prayer group invited us to attend the annual banquet of the local pregnancy center. There, I heard for the first time the testimony of a post-abortive woman who had suffered torment for years, but finally came back to the Lord and asked him to forgive her and heal her inner wounds. I then attended a bible study for post-abortive women and became a volunteer at the pregnancy center myself.

Years later, I attended a Justice For All training seminar at the high school of one of our children. Seeing the Justice For Exhibit was heart-wrenching. I sobbed openly as I spoke with Executive Director David Lee and his colleague Tammy Cook. David encouraged me to allow our living children to also honor their lost brothers and sisters. After that Jeff and I took our children with us to a nearby church cemetery, and with the help of a kind volunteer, we placed plaques for each of our aborted children on the *Memorial Wall for the Unborn*.

By God's grace I continue to volunteer at the pregnancy center and also with Justice For All. I pray that anyone who reads this testimony will be moved by the Holy Spirit to draw near to God and be reconciled to him. I have received great consolations from the Lord, reassuring me of his love and forgiveness. An ocean of mercy is available if we will humbly repent and ask for his mercy.

May the peace of Christ be with you, and may God bless you all at JFA!