

I am here today because in 1958 my mother did not have the legal right to choose whether I would live or die. She was fifteen years old when she was impregnated by an eighteen year old altar boy whom she was seeing. She chose to keep me a secret from him and from her parents until just one month before my birth. The whole family chose to relinquish me for adoption. Young ladies back then were shamed for unwanted pregnancies. My life was not a public affair, nor was my future considered a women's rights issue.

If I had been conceived after 1973, I might not be here today. I am glad to be alive and to be the mother of four children and grandmother of three.

My story is not really a good-girl story. During my teenage years I made many reckless decisions. I was rebellious and angry. While in high school I participated in all the stereotypical hippie behavior, including visiting Planned Parenthood to get my birth control pills without my parents knowing.

My adopted father was a colonel in the Air Force and quite a tyrant. I wanted out and away from him. Therefore, I found the first willing man and started shacking-up with him, which was getting popular in the late 1970's.



I remember going to a hospital once during this time because I was ill, and the nurse who was on duty just happened to be my parents' neighbor. When I was younger, I had babysat her pet fish, and later, her baby girl. She attempted to counsel me about my lifestyle. I remember how distraught she was when she learned about my circumstances. She was so conflicted because she knew my mother, but felt obligated not to call her because of client-patient privilege. I could see in her eyes what she was thinking: "How the culture has stolen your innocence!"

Well, I ended up marrying the guy I was living with. The culture of the day had taught me that pornography was all right, so when this man's addiction to it was brought to my attention, I thought nothing of it and ignored it. Many years later I found myself still married to him, enslaved in an unhealthy, co-dependent relationship to a sex addict.

I had trusted my life to Christ by that time, and I was homeschooling my four children. I had even become a church leader of co-dependency groups. I was trying to make the best of a bad situation. Eventually, though, I folded under the pressure of depression and the feelings of defeat. I separated from my husband, and I turned away from God, blaming him for my husband's failures. It was during this dark time that I went back to my old lifestyle.

So there I was in my mid-thirties, already with four children, and angry at God in my brokenness. I began looking for comfort ... again, with a man. I got pregnant.

I was horrified. The man was not someone that I would want parenting my child. Even though I was not currently walking with God, I still could not imagine bearing the shame of this pregnancy. No one knew except the father. He was out of town when I called to break the news. He immediately responded by providing cash for an abortion. There was no talk of choices or of other options.

During my initial visit to the clinic, I felt a kind of numbed sense of acceptance of my situation. There was no mention of a baby, only my "situation" and how they would help me out of it.

The night before the abortion, I explained what I was going to do to one of my sponsors, an accountability partner. I only told her because I thought someone should know where I was going in case something dreadful happened to me. That one person said nothing to dissuade me from my decision. If

only she had spoken up! So many losses could have been gains if that ONE friend had said anything to me.

My kids were in school that day, so I drove alone to downtown Dallas. Along the way I checked-out. Emotionally, mentally, and spiritually I ceased to function. I vaguely remember the cold table. I remember my body shaking and the sound of the suction machine. I remember fearing for my life while I tried to pretend the reality away. Denial set in almost immediately as I sat in an empty recovery room. I felt relieved, while at the same time experiencing what would take years for me to understand was a kind of death of myself and my life as I had known it.



Not long after the abortion, I had a procedure done to ensure that I would not have another unwanted pregnancy. Later, I found out that the surgeon had taken it upon herself to make sure the procedure would be irreversible, since I already had four kids.

After this I began hanging around with people who influenced me to go further and further away from God. I finally divorced my husband, and I gave up on being a responsible mom. I was completely lost.

After the abortion, I lived with a perpetual sense of guilt for all the choices I had made and for the bad example I was setting for my children. *How* on earth could I have possibly led this life after becoming a Christian! I was filled with self-hatred and could not understand why my relationship with my four living children seemed so difficult and detached.

After living in darkness for several years, I began calling out to God, and he was waiting and ready to begin the process of healing and restoring my broken heart. Over the course of several years, counselors and mentors have helped me recover my life.

One night during the recovery process, I had a vision in which the father of my aborted baby was holding a knife. As I asked God what the vision was about, memories of the abortion came flooding back. I had truly buried the facts deep in my mind. It was at that moment that I realized how death had taken hold of my life and my relationships. I had lost and left behind all creative expressions, I had no sense of connectedness with my children, and I had no joy in my life. Sadness and depression had been the norm, even up until this vision.

That night, accepting that I had agreed to murder and death, I repented to God and renounced my horrific action. I received God's forgiveness, and since then I have received much relief from what was a constant inner torment, a torment resulting from my buried nightmare, the nightmare that I had killed my baby. Over time I have been set free.

In 2011, in a late-night email, I learned that the Justice For All training program was coming to North Texas. There was no question that I would go. During those days of working with JFA on how to talk about abortion and participating in outreach on a college campus, God opened my heart to an even deeper healing. Later, I took a local course called "Set Free," where I recognized that many of the ways in which I had been suffering over the years are typical in women who have had abortions, even down to the disconnect with living children. So much for the lie that abortion is only a "simple, surgical procedure."

Another part of my healing process has been a search for my biological mom. Last year while in Colorado on a JFA mission trip, I met her for the first time in fifty-three years! I am not proud of my journey, but I am grateful for God's faithfulness and certain that he redeems us.