

Day 2

POST-ABORTION HEALING

Nearly 1.2 million Americans have died in all U.S. wars. We honor these heroes every Memorial Day for their self-sacrificial service to our nation, and we recognize the tragedy of their deaths. And yet, there is an even larger number that we often fail to recognize. Since the 1973 case *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion, there have been over 59 million abortions in the U.S. This is nearly fifty times the number of U.S. soldiers who have died since the American Revolution.

RISKS OF ABORTION

This is an unspeakable horror for which our country will have to account. How could we allow so many million innocent lives to be lost? And, to make matters worse, behind every one of these abortions is a woman who is hurting, whether it is her first abortion or whether she has had several.

Today, there is a growing trend in the United States to share abortion stories in the hope that abortion will be seen as

something normal and everyday. For instance, *TeenVogue* published a horrendous article suggesting gifts that teens can get for their friends who have had abortions to make it seem as insignificant and normal as possible.

But this pop culture version is the complete opposite of reality. Listen to or read women's actual accounts of abortion and the truth is shocking. Abortion hurts women,

plain and simple.

Abortion has lasting physical and emotional consequences for women that exceed those of any other type of surgery or medical procedure.

Women who aborted have a 138% higher risk of mental health problems compared to all other women who have given birth, and a 55% higher risk of mental health problems compared to women with an “unplanned pregnancy” who have given birth.

Women with a history of abortion have higher rates of anxiety (34% higher), depression (37%), alcohol abuse (110%), marijuana use (230%), and suicidal behavior (155%), compared to those who have not had an abortion. (British Journal of Psychiatry, 2011)

This is not what we want for people! God's plan for our lives does not involve this level of pain and anguish. When we turn our backs on his plan and choose abortion as a solution to a problem, we create even more problems. How can we follow God's law instead?

WHY DO WOMEN CHOOSE ABORTION?

The reason a woman may choose abortion is complex. When a woman finds herself pregnant unexpectedly, she can have a range of emotions. Often, there is a desire to “go back” to before the pregnancy or “undo” it. In many instances,

especially for teens and young women, abortion is seen as a fast and easy way to erase the pregnancy and get on with life. The uncomfortable truth is that this is never the case, and often abortion has devastating, life-changing consequences.

ABORTION IS THE LAST RESORT. SO, WHAT IS THE FIRST RESORT?

Abortion is rarely seen as a good option. Even ardent abortion-rights activists can't say anything truly good about abortion. It is a last resort for women who feel they have no other options. There is no one in their lives they feel they can turn to. No one is offering to support them in what they know in their hearts to be the best choice--to choose life. Everyone wants them to choose a “quick fix” and get on with their lives— including, very often, themselves. This makes abortion incredibly lonely. Abortion isolates a woman from many of the people who love and want what is best for her— parents, siblings, friends, boyfriend or husband, and particularly her unborn child. And, abortion almost never “fixes” a troubled relationship, but generally leads to relationship break-up.

Men who are truly motivated by what is best for women will not force or encourage them to obtain an abortion. A man should also never tell a woman making a pregnancy decision, “I'll support you whatever you choose.” Why? Because what he is saying is that he has absolutely no preference either way, no responsibility in the situation, that it is all her decision. No woman wants to hear that! Having a baby is just as much his responsibility as hers—both the man and the woman are already parents. When a woman is told to

choose “whatever”, she can be left feeling incredibly alone to make the most important decision of her life. And, alone to face the consequences of her choice.

Instead, men should support women and encourage them to make the decision that is best for all involved—which is never abortion. Most importantly, they should continue to support the woman whether she chooses to parent or make an adoption plan, because even though it is the right decision, it can be incredibly difficult.

If most women choose abortion because of external factors— finances, bad timing, relationships, family pressure—then what happens when the external factors are fixed? If a woman was treated with respect, rather than asked to find a quick solution to her “problem”, there is a great chance that she would choose life. In fact, 80% of women who visit pregnancy help centers and receive counseling, resources,



and see their babies in an ultrasound, change their minds from abortion to life.

Why? Because they all of a sudden realize they are not alone. That they have someone (with actual answers and resources) who will stand by them and help them with all of the factors in their lives that are difficult.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

First, if you know someone who becomes pregnant and is scared, the best thing you can do is listen to her story. Allow her to talk with you and tell you what is upsetting her and why.

Then, ask her to take some time to make her decision. Rushing into a pregnancy decision for a “quick fix” is never a good thing. The effects of that decision will stay with her for the rest of her life, no matter what she chooses. And, a woman needs some time to think and pray about her decision.

Next, help her find professional, real help for both her pregnancy and her other concerns. Go to optionsforpregnancy.com to find a pregnancy clinic close to her that will help her with all of her options.

Finally, make a commitment to supporting her choice for life. Encourage her to look realistically at adoption as an option that is both life-affirming for her and wonderful for her child. If this friend is important to you, then you will want to help her avoid a life of pain and grief. You will want to help her find practical help, not choose to end a life just because of “poor timing”.



If you know a friend who has had an abortion, reassure her of God's love for her and of His infinite mercy. It is important to involve a trusted adult, who can help your friend receive the proper healing that she needs. She can access confidential support at ByYourSideLA.org.

Will this mean that their problems will be solved? No. But, it does mean that they will have help. And, for the vast majority of women, that is all they need to make the choice they already know in their hearts is the best choice for both themselves and their babies. We are called to support women and their needs so that they can make this choice.

One reason women can be so torn apart after abortion is that people continue to tell them that having an abortion was “okay” even though they know deep inside of them that it is wrong. In order to truly begin the process of healing, a woman must recognize what she has done and ask forgiveness from her baby and from God, instead of pretending that it was okay.

An essential part of this process is receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pope Francis states, “I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life. In the same way, however, I can and must state that there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father. May every priest, therefore, be a guide, support and comfort to penitents on this journey of special reconciliation.”



Abortion is harmful to all involved, and gravely wounds one's relationship with God. However, there is no sin that will prevent someone from being reconciled to Him, if they are willing to receive His mercy. It is a blessing for us to share this knowledge with those who have experienced abortion, so that they can find peace and healing. It is also our responsibility to support pregnant women so they can choose life and they and their children can thrive rather than live in remorse.