

Closing the Door on Abortion's Guilt

You can't just ignore the shame caused when you kill an unborn child. But you can find mercy and forgiveness.

✖ My son David never had the chance to live because I made the choice to abort him in 1988. I was divorced with two children and was living a very promiscuous lifestyle. When I discovered I was pregnant I felt irritation and fear. To hide my sin of sex outside marriage, I chose to abort my child, even though I knew it was wrong.

Initially, I felt relief. The unwanted pregnancy was taken care of. I didn't tell anybody what I had done because I was too ashamed. In order to forget about it I stuffed down my feelings and didn't allow myself to think about it at all.

I knew the baby I had aborted was a boy because the doctor told me so after the procedure. Even though I remember very little about the abortion itself, that memory stayed with me through the years.

(Read another powerful testimony of God's healing power for women who had abortions.)

In spite of the successes I later achieved in my life and the fact that I had a loving husband and wonderful children, there was a deep emptiness inside me. I was filled with fear: fear of God's punishment, fear that my son hated me, fear of others finding out what a terrible person I really was, and fear of facing myself. I couldn't form close relationships because I was sure that if my family and friends knew about my secret they would reject me. I was certain that God didn't want anything to do with me.

Depression and hopelessness settled over me and went deep down

inside me. On the outside things looked OK, but inside I was alone.

After trying antidepressants, counselors and everything else I could think of to fix myself, I finally surrendered my secret and feelings to Jesus on November 4, 2000. That was the night my healing began.

I will remember that night forever! As I lay on the floor crying and telling Jesus how sorry I was for what I had done and finally acknowledging the pain in my heart, I knew He was there with me. Instead of rejecting me, He showed me such tenderness and love that my heart was overwhelmed by Him. He dealt with me very privately and personally. He told me He loved me, that He understood the pain in my heart, and that He knew I was truly sorry for my actions.

The next day when I awoke the darkness was gone, and I was a totally different person. Psalm 23:3 says, "He restores my soul" (NKJV). During the restoration period in my life, there have been many difficult times as I faced my sins and the feelings inside myself, but Jesus has never left my side. He continues to be with me every step I take.

Along the way I shared my secret with my husband, tenderhearted Christian women and Christian counselors. They all demonstrated the unconditional love of the heavenly Father to me.

I also participated in a healing Bible study that specifically dealt with abortion. It was there that I learned that God knit my baby together in my womb and that his life began at conception. I also learned about forgiveness. I learned how to grieve for my son. I learned about the limitless grace of God.

At the conclusion of the study, there was a memorial service for the aborted children of all the people participating. After honoring David in the service, the wound in my heart was healed. I no longer focus on "the abortion"; instead, my focus

is on David, my son.

Nor do I fear sharing my secret because I know the truth, and the truth is, Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted, to give them beauty for ashes and to turn their mourning into dancing, as Isaiah 61 declares. I have experienced the reality of these words firsthand.

Recently, my husband, Mike, and I attended a special dedication service for David. We placed his name on a memorial wall that stands in a beautiful garden outside a pregnancy center in Orlando, Florida. At the end of the service we released a white balloon to the sky with his name on it. I was reluctant to let go of the balloon because the memory of my son is so precious to me. But I now have the hope of being with him in heaven.

Thankfully, this story doesn't end with my healing. In November 2006, God gave me an assignment based on Isaiah 61. He asked me to reach out to others who are hurting from the pain of abortion and to tell them about His forgiveness, love and grace toward them. This is the beauty God gave me for the ashes of my sin. I now lead others through abortion-recovery Bible studies.

Instead of guarding my secret, I share it with others to give them hope. God wants them to know how much He loves them. He has great compassion and tenderness toward the broken. He has plans for their lives. He wants them to know that abortion didn't cancel His plans for their future.

Jesus can be trusted with the broken parts within us all. He is the only One who can truly heal our wounds. And after the healing is complete, He will use our stories to help others.

Janet Darrah is the founder of Beauty for Ashes, an abortion-recovery ministry based in Clermont, Florida. She lives in Clermont with her husband, Mike, and two children, Elizabeth and Benjamin. The Darrahs have been married for 16 years.

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