

Gazing Into the Human Face of Abortion

On Oct. 4, roughly a month before the U.S. **presidential election**, headlines across the nation proclaimed that “Abortion Is Threshold Issue for One in Six U.S. Voters,” with the subhead: “Nearly as many single-issue abortion voters are pro-choice as **pro-life**.”

According to a Sept. 24-27 Gallup poll, 45 percent of voters say **abortion** will be one of many important factors they consider in voting, whereas 34 percent don't see abortion as a major issue.

But for every woman who is considering an abortion or who has aborted a baby, it *is* a major issue. In the heat of the current political environment, we quickly forget the human, emotional toll of abortion.

When the American Psychological Association asked a sample of respondents who reported having an abortion about their reaction, 76.6 percent reported negative emotional consequences.

“Without the Lord's healing I would have a hard time dealing with the blood on my hands,” Jeniece Learned said on the website. “Abortion is not a quick fix. It's not a bandage you can put on the sore. When that bandage falls off, a scar remains forever.”

Can God heal those scars? *Will He?* Shari Rigby, who recently starred in *October Baby*, would argue “yes.”

The Road to Healing

The film follows the journey of a young woman who discovers she survived an abortion and was then put up for adoption. Her search for the truth leads her to her birth mother and to

discovering the power of **forgiveness**.

Rigby, who plays the birth mother in the movie, was taken on her own emotional journey in the process of filming.

It started with the script.

When Rigby's friend and colleague Jon Erwin called to talk about *October Baby*, he said he had a part that would be perfect for her without providing further details.

"I was so excited as I sat down to read the script," Rigby recalled.

It took about 90 pages before she got to her role, the part of the birth mother. "I was overwhelmed as I read it, because there were these things from my life that no one knew but me and my husband and a few close people."

Things like her job as a paralegal in a law firm 20 years ago. Things like her own abortion.

Rigby had gotten involved in a relationship at a very young age and ended up getting pregnant. She had her first baby when she was 17 years old: "I graduated from high school when my son was five weeks old. That marked the beginning of my journey as a mom."

A couple of years into the marriage, Rigby realized she needed to leave it: "I knew my son was a true gift from God. When he was little, I would look at him and think, 'I want something different for his life. I don't want him to be brought up in something that is not a good environment.'"

Rigby got divorced and went on to college, working two jobs to make the proverbial ends meet. "I was just trying to be a single mom and support my son," she recalls. "During that time, I definitely wasn't walking the right walk—I was very much in and out of relationships—and just trying to get by, really."

That is when she faced the agonizing choice of abortion, one she kept shrouded in secrecy for many years.

Meeting her new husband and rededicating her life to Christ at the age of 25 brought a true turning point for Rigby. “At that point, God started pruning me,” she says. “Everything that I had walked through in my life and all of the things I had endured, He just started breaking off of me and creating this new person.”

A Personal Script

Fast-forward to 2010 and Rigby is curled up in her favorite chair, reading the *October Baby* script. She says: “I started crying because I felt as if God had written it for me.”

She realized she was holding something that only God could have ordained—it was her very own story. “He started a work in my life the moment I started reading the script. He knew that I still needed to be healed, even though He had forgiven me.”

In doing the movie, God showed her what grace really looks like. “When filming got underway,” says Rigby, “Jesus met me on the set and walked me through each one of those scenes. That wasn’t me up there. It was His message.”

She found complete healing and didn’t even need to act: “That was my moment with God and His with me. I felt him speaking to me, saying, ‘It’s OK. It’s over. You’ve been forgiven.’ I received forgiveness in my life and then started to see what this movie was going to do.”

The producers, after hearing how many people were interested in Rigby’s story, approached her and asked if she would share her testimony to use at the end of the film.

Now Rigby receives message after message on Facebook. When she meets people at screenings or after speaking engagements, they will share personal stories of what they’ve gone through.

“I’ve never been so touched,” said Rigby.

Women share how they were healed not just from having abortions, but sometimes from toxic relationships. Men who paid for abortions or had taken their girlfriends to the clinic talk about receiving forgiveness. “It’s story after story after story of overwhelming physical and mental pain,” Rigby said.

She sits in awe that the Lord has given her an opportunity to share *her* story and to be a sounding board for men and women to say, “I’ve gone through this and I found forgiveness.”

Sometimes Rigby thinks she will cry the rest of her life. “When you know that God has chosen you to do something, you have to put your faith in Him,” she says. “You want to know why—but there is no reason. You just look back and you are so thankful.”

The Next Chapter

After *October Baby* was released, Rigby got caught in a whirlwind because no one was expecting that so many men and women would find healing through her character and story. The film prompted such an outpouring of questions that she now is putting the finishing touches on a book that will share her story in depth.

“It’s about what I went through in finding my identity as a teenage mom, and really understanding the grace and **forgiveness** of Christ and how He took all of the things I had done in my life, and all of the ashes, and made them into something beautiful,” says Rigby.

Look for the book in early spring of 2013.

A Word to Readers

If you have had an abortion or are considering one, Shari Rigby has a few words of encouragement:

- We all belong to Christ—He forgave us. He knows what you are going through in this moment, and He wants to be there for you to hold you, and give you the freedom that you will not be held captive by shame. If you have gone through an abortion—or several—don't allow it to hold you captive in secrecy. Allow yourself to rest in the arms of Jesus.
- If it's something that you are contemplating now, think about what you are going to go through as a young woman or a young man—that this is something that will be with you for the rest of your life. You really want to choose wisely. You want to seek counsel from wise people who will guide you and give you correct information.
- The choice for life is so beautiful. You want to **choose life**. If you don't want to have this baby, give it up for adoption. Make an adoption plan and give somebody else the joy of life.
- If you are contemplating abortion, think for a moment that you might be carrying the next president of the United States, the person that cures cancer or Alzheimer's disease. Every person has been formed by God and they have a purpose from the time of their birth. They could be the most special individual in this world and you would not want to destroy that.

Read the original article at .