

Healing of Abortion and Miscarriage

This is what the Lord says¹ “ a voice is heard in Ramah,
mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and
refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more.”

This is what the Lord says¹ “ restrain your voice from weeping
and your eyes from tears. . . declares the Lord . . . there is
hope for your future,” declares the Lord. “ your children will
return to their land.”

Jeremiah⁴

Points of Emphasis

Abortion and miscarriage can have devastating and long-lasting effects on people’s lives and the lives of those they love. But there is hope: Women can find reconciliation and healing after the trauma of abortion or miscarriage through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this lesson, Dr. Susan Stanford-rue speaks from her own personal experience and her years of professional experience to help us better understand how to help walk with a person through the healing of abortion or miscarriage.

Outline of Healing of Abortion and Miscarriage

Severity of Personal Loss in Death of Loved Ones

- Stress scale studies show that the death of a spouse causes the greatest level of trauma.
- The trauma caused by the death of a child closely follows, or may be even greater than that resulting in the death of a spouse.
- The grieving process in the loss of a child can go on for years.

Abortion and Miscarriage

- Poem by Paulette Hawkins: “Come, Wounded Mother.”
- Possibly one pregnancy in four ends in abortion.
- The statistics of miscarriages are unknown but are probably even higher than the abortion statistics.

The Difference Between Miscarriage and Abortion

- Miscarriage is very accepted in our society.
- A woman who has had a miscarriage most likely will receive love and support and be able to openly express her grief.
- The woman who has had an abortion will probably silently bear her guilt, shame and deep grief alone, sometimes never being able to tell anyone for many, many years.

Both Need to be Grieved

- The experience of both abortion and miscarriage is a death experience.
- Naming the child may be a very healing factor in the grieving process.

Views on Miscarriage Have Changed

- People no longer take a patronizing view toward the mother after a miscarriage. (“There, now, everything is

- going to be alright.”)
- A woman should not try to get pregnant again right away.
- The grieving process must be allowed.

The Stages of Grief: From denial to acceptance and reconciliation

Abortion is more complicated

- It is the loss of a child at the mother's own hand.
- It seems to the mother an unforgivable offense.
- It carries the complication of shame and guilt.
- Miscarriage and abortion need to be grieved and reconciled, but abortion involves a tremendous element of forgiveness.

Unmourned Grief

- Unmourned grief is “complicated mourning.”
- Unmourned grief contaminates our feelings of self-worth and our relationships.
- C. S. Lewis said, “We cannot grieve alone.”
- Having a trusted friend to whom one can reach out makes the grieving process less difficult.

Abortion Often Seems Like the Only Option

- The Nurturing Network offers options to pregnant women in crisis.
- Many women are coerced into abortion and are, before and after, left unsupported, emotionally and/or physically.
- The Christian community should offer viable alternatives to pregnant women in crisis.

Abortion: Share the Secret

- The experience of abortion is too heavy a secret to bear alone.
- Trust is broken in a relationship in which abortion has occurred.

Two Case Examples

Dulling the Feelings and Re-Experiencing

- In trying to cope alone with the reality of the death, the woman dulls her feelings.
- Efforts to suppress the trauma of the abortion fail, and intrusive memories keep re-occurring: PTSD
- Women who have experienced abortion often have recurring nightmares having to do with babies and children.
- A woman may develop detriment and very unhealthy habits or lifestyle to try to escape the painful memory of abortion.
- Dulling feelings and putting up a wall from the pain eventually numbs all feelings and ultimately leads to isolation and depression.
- Anniversary dates surrounding the abortion many times trigger deep depression and often a plea for help.

Specifically with Miscarriage: Listen to her Story

- The woman who has suffered a miscarriage must allow herself all stages of grieving.
- She needs to talk about her child and her loss.
- A major part of the healing comes through the opportunity to tell one's story.
- It takes a minimum of six months to a year to go through the grieving process.

Denial

- Denial is a defense mechanism and is part of the grieving process.

- Accepting responsibility for one's action is a key piece to one's healing.

Shame and Guilt

- Guilt can be healthy. Shame can be toxic and binding.
- Only Jesus can break the bondage of shame.
- Guilt reminds us we have something with which we need to deal. However, prolonged guilt is not good.

Stages of Healing

- Belief in God, belief in Our Lord Jesus: Complete healing cannot come without the healing touch of Jesus.
- Let her (or him) tell the story.
- Let her (or him) express their feelings.
 - Listen with compassion
 - One can have compassion for another's situation without condoning it.
- Forgiveness
 - Forgiving all who were involved in the abortion (including herself) is a key factor in the mother's healing process. This includes doctors, nurses, those who encouraged the abortion, anyone who aided the act in any way.
 - The unforgiving person pays a greater price than anyone by holding onto all the negative emotions. Freedom results in the forgiving process.
 - Jesus can take the mother from the focus on the death of her child to the knowledge that her child is safe in His arms.

The Healing Journey

- In prayer, the mother/father can ask Jesus to guide her through the places in her memories that need to be touched by Him so that true healing and restoration can take place.
- The mother may commit the child to the Lord through the Sacrament of the baptismal prayer, or some similar prayer.

An Example of Jesus' Healing

Questions and Answers

Come, Wounded Mother

by eaulette hawkins

*Go away. Don't look into my eyes, lest you see into my aching heart, into
the hole left there when my child was wrenched from beneath it.*

*Don't come any closer, for if you knew, you would turn your face and walk
away. And I'd suffer the loss of my child and you.*

*Behold a Father listens and His Son intercedes: "Set her free. Penetrate
the barrier that keeps her from Me."*

*He said, "Come," and so I came and poured out my heart. He healed me
with love, while together we wept. Forgiveness came, as I whispered His
Name.*

*O Come. Come, wounded mother. Come out of yourself. He won't rest 'til
His love sets you free.*

Myths Associated with Pregnancy Loss

adapted from T. Rando, Treatment of Complicated Mourning, Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1993.

- Grief and mourning decline steadily over time.
- All pregnancy losses evidence the same type of mourning.
- Bereaved parents need only express their feelings in order to resolve their mourning, preferably once or twice.
- There is nothing to mourn after an abortion.
- To be healthy after a pregnancy loss, the mourner must "put that person out of mind."
- Grief can only affect the mourner psychologically, I. E. It will not interfere with bodily functions or manifest in other ways.
- Intensity and length of mourning are a testimony of love for the lost child.
- When one mourns the loss of a child, one mourns only that loss and nothing else.
- Mourning is over in a year.
- The intensity of grief and loss in a pregnancy is related to the length of the pregnancy.
- If individuals don't feel grief immediately after a pregnancy loss, then they won't feel grief later on.
- Parents who have experienced a pregnancy loss should be encouraged to become pregnant again as soon as possible.
- Grief is what women feel, not men.

Principles of Pregnancy Loss Intervention

The process of reconciliation after a pregnancy loss is an interactional process – the interactions and inter-relationships of very human people reaching out to each other, and if they have a faith perspective, with their relationship to God. For the care giver, this assumes the need for openness and a willingness to become involved. No one emerges ready to do this work. Yet we must all start somewhere, realizing it is always difficult to begin. Following are principles for intervention and reconciliation, in the even you are called upon for assistance.

Be empathetic in order to comprehend the magnitude of pain over the death of a child and/or feelings of loss surrounding this traumatic event.

Be accepting and unafraid of walking through the valley of difficult feelings, not rejecting or limiting.

Listen and speak of child death or loss, recognizing it for all that it is – the loss of a unique individual and an unparalleled human tragedy. Legitimize the loss by openly talking about it. Remember: To be silent is to deny the child's very existence.

Attempt to resolve your own fears about death and of intruding into the intimacy and privacy of people's lives.

Believe in the individual's strengths and abilities to cope, to take charge of his or her shattered life again, being hopeful despite hopelessness.

Facilitate communication among loved ones by listening, clarifying, promoting and encouraging interchange and acceptance of feelings. Remember: talking about feelings is not the same as feeling feelings, nor is the expression of grief effective if it remains solitary or limited to a single occurrence.

The transition from victim to survivor takes time, trust and courage. Your presence and caring may well make the difference.

If they believe in God, encourage re-involvement in their spiritual life. Encourage a good-bye ritual, including committal prayers for the child, and the importance of forgiveness and acceptance for true healing. It has often been said that God's love is far greater than the width and depth of human mistake-making.

Scriptures for Healing of Abortion and Miscarriage

Deut 30:19-20: This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live 20 and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.

2 Kings 20:5: 'This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you.'

2 Chron 6:29-31: and when a prayer or plea is made by any of your people Israel-each one aware of his afflictions and pains, and spreading out his hands toward this temple- 30 then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with each man according to all he does, since you know his heart (for you alone know the hearts of men), 31 so that they will fear you and walk in your ways all the time they live in the land you gave our fathers.

Job 6:2-3: "If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales! 3 It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas- no wonder my words have been impetuous."

Job 16:6: "Yet if I speak, my pain is not relieved; and if I refrain, it does not go away."

Job 19:25-27: I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes-I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Ps 6:3: My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long?

Ps 6:6: I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.

Ps 6:9: The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer.

Ps 31:5: Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth.

Ps 31:9-10: Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. 10 My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning;

Ps 34:18: The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Ps 38:8-9: I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. 9 All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you.

Ps 51:10-12: Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Ps 86:5: You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.

Ps 103:1-5: Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. 2 Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- 3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, 4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, 5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Ps 109:22: For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.

Ps 116:1-9: I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. 2 Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. 3 The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. 4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, save me!" 5 The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. 6 The LORD protects the simple hearted; when I was in great need, he saved me. 7 Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. 8 For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, 9 that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

Ps 126:5: Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

Ps 139:13-16: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Ps 147:3: He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Isa 43:1: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

Isa 49:15: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"

Isa 53:4-6: Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isa 61:1-3: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion--to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Jer 1:5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Jer 29:10-14: For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity.

Jer 31:15-17: This is what the LORD says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more." 16 This is what the LORD says: "Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded," declares the LORD. "They will return from the land of the enemy. 17 So there is hope for your future," declares the LORD. "Your children will return to their own land.

Dan 9:8-10: The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; 10 we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets.

Matt 5:4: Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matt 6:14-15: For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matt 19:13-15: Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." 15 When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

Luke 1:39-45: At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

Luke 23:34: Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

John 10:1-4: "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. 3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

Acts 13:38: "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

Rom 3:23-25: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Col 1:13-14: For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Col 2:13-15: When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Col 3:13-14: Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Heb 9:15: For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance-now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Rev 7:17: For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Rev 21:2-4: And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."