

Listening to Abortion: What helps, what hurts

By Kim Ketola

(Note: This article first appeared in [CBA Retailers + Resources](#), August, 2012)



I wasn't trying to probe into anyone's past or coax out a confession. In fact, I was so new to this church that I was reluctant to share something so personal. Yet, when I disclosed an abortion in my past, I heard from several other women in our thirty-member Bible study group who had also lost a child to abortion. Perhaps these women were relieved to hear someone, anyone, bring up the subject at church. Maybe I just seem like a safe person since I mentioned having written a [book about spiritual recovery after abortion](#). But each one eagerly shared her secret with me that day. And each story was as different as the woman who told it.

During prayer time one sought me out to whisper through tears. She had no memory of the father—after a drunken one-night stand she couldn't even recall his name. But she vividly recalled feeling hustled in the aftershock of a positive pregnancy test by the high-pressure sales tactics at the abortion clinic. Another woman approached me during the break to report she was relieved to be rid of the boyfriend who bailed when he found out she was pregnant. Still, she wonders all these years later if she hadn't missed out on the daughter she had always wanted.

A third woman waited for me after the meeting to say she was a strong believer when she went off to college, but she was determined to sow her wild oats, and then equally determined to escape the one-way ticket to poverty this pregnancy represented in her mind. Now she was terrified her own daughter was following in the same destructive path. I also listened to the silence of a staff member of the church that day. She simply took my hand after most of the others had gone, very slowly and deliberately looked me in the eye and said, "I did too." She then placed her hand near her lips as if to say *Shhh* and gave my hand a squeeze before she turned and walked away.

As the weeks unfolded I heard from others. I was surprised but not shocked—Christian women choose abortion in almost [equal ratios](#) to women of other faiths or no faith at all. The surprising thing to me was how closely this group matched [the statistical average](#): one out of every five churchgoing women has had an abortion (slightly lower among [evangelicals](#)). Including women with a Christian affiliation pushes the average to [one in three](#). There is a hidden mission field right here within our churches; millions of

men and women are hurting and confused. It seems our faith does not protect us from abortion, but it is the answer, and our only hope, in the aftermath.

How can you help?

After abortion women and men wonder if they have committed an unforgivable sin. They may feel confused but they don't know where to go to look for answers. They need to know that the distressing sense of having lost a child—an actual member of their families—is real, and can be mourned and grieved as we would any beloved family member. Even one we are learning to love too late. They need to hear God's love and mercy. They need the grace of Jesus Christ in his power to forgive, redeem and renew. And they need you. Open your heart to those who have been hurt by abortion:

- Include post-abortion books and Bible studies in your class offerings and study groups.
- Encourage your pastor to preach with sensitivity to those who need the message of forgiveness and hope after abortion.
- Season your words with grace as you defend the pro-life position.
- Speak God's Word when you don't know what to say—it will be effective (Isaiah 55:11).

Listening to abortion is a difficult ministry, but a priceless gift to one processing the complex emotions that follow such a deep and intense experience. If you hear heartbreak and contrition, be kind and model mercy. If you sense a numb or hardened heart, be sure you share the truth in love to break through those defenses. Be patient in hope.

And love them well.

*This article first appeared in the August 2012 [CBA Retailers + Resources](#) which also [reviewed **Cradle My Heart, Finding God's Love After Abortion**](#) calling it “a must read.”*