

HELLO...My name is Mary Lockwood and I would like to tell you a little about my involvement with pro life issues. I have been involved with Right to Life of Michigan and various other volunteer positions with the pro life movement for almost 4 years.

I humbly accepted the invitation to get involved in the pro life movement/ and/ I humbly accepted the invitation to talk to you tonight to share my story...my journey, my confusion, my pain, my healing, my hope. **AND I ask you this evening/ what is it/ we/ are being called to do when it comes to abortion? Think about it...we are all here for a reason.**

There are so many different ways and different levels of involvement when it comes to pro-life issues but when it is personal I can tell you it is done with fire in your heart. And, when I say it is personal my talk tonight is personal but truly not about me but rather about each and every woman/ and/ man/ and /family who may have gone through what I did. And continue to go through what I did.

I am just the messenger this evening but with a very heartfelt message.

There are two key points I would like to talk about this evening.....the first is the power of forgiveness and healing as a post-abortive woman. The second point is that men, too, need to heal from the after effects of abortion and to be forgiven.

FORGIVENESS

Each and everyday/ I am in awe of the forgiveness I have received from God.

I am in awe of the acceptance and understanding I have received from my friends and the gentleness that has been imparted upon me by different groups such as this one.

I am humbled by it all because I did not think about what I was doing REALLY when I decided to have my abortions. What I am about to tell you is not something I am proud of but I know, unfortunately, there is NOTHING I can do about what I did except go forth and do good with it which is why I am here. This is part of my forgiveness. HE knows what I have done, HE knows what we all do and in spite of it HE forgives and HE loves us anyway, unconditionally..

As I mentioned, I was so in awe of God's forgiveness and there is another part to that...I needed to forgive myself / as well as the man who was involved in my life at that time and chose not to be part of anything to do with my pregnancies and abortions. I spent many years hating that person and hating him for not being more involved, / for not being part of my decision making, for not caring, for not showing some sort of compassion for all that I had gone through. How could he not care?

How dare he not understand what I had gone through./ I hated him, I hated myself,, I hated my abortions and I hated my life. 22 years after my first abortion I forgave myself but I needed to forgive him/even though I had not been in contact with him for many years I needed to forgive him in my heart for myself, for him/so as to be able to move on. I have

forgiven because it is in being forgiven that we can forgive. I cannot begin to tell you what that has done for me.

Had I had the resources of a center like Family Life Services my decision would have definitely been different. To have been able to talk to someone who was warm and caring and loving and NOT judgmental and not pointing a finger at me would have changed my decision. I know it in my heart.

When I was asked to be the emcee last year at a Right to Life of Michigan event and was prompted to share my story, I accepted, and I did, and believe me the truth has set me free. There is NOT a day that goes by that I do not think about what I have done and ask for God's forgiveness.

When we think of abortion back in the late 1970's many of us might think of a back alley, a secretive place, dirty, dark surroundings....not true as that was NOT the case with me. My abortions were performed in a hospital setting, a very sterile atmosphere, competent doctors with families at home, with no counseling whatsoever, paid for by my group health plan.....no questions asked. My body, my choice...but was it really?

I will never forget the feeling each time I went in...I knew deep in my heart what I was doing was wrong, that I would regret it, afterall I wasn't a kid...I was a grown woman who had always wanted children so why was I doing this?

I thought I had no other choice...I had a career, I had a sick parent I was a caregiver for, I had people depending on me, I had my reputation to uphold, I had future plans. I was a Christian woman with beliefs...why didn't I seek help? Oh yeah,it was my pregnancy, it was my sin, it was my problem.

The coldness of the pre-op room, the sterile operation, the doctor coming in to tell me what they were going to do, the nurses looking at me, ...they called it a D&C, the emptiness I felt, the tears flowing freely and I was even ashamed of those.....the awful feeling after it was over was indescribable...walking into the hospital with life inside of me and walking out with such awful emptiness, with loneliness, with heartbreak, with guilt..so many different feelings and I feel them today just as much when I think about it and as I did then. To borrow a saying from a good friend of mine.....Good People make bad choices about things they don't know.

There is NOT a day that goes by that I don't think about what I did and ask for God's forgiveness..

I believe all things happen for reasons, many times unknown to us. The reason I became involved in pro life issues was purely personal.....had I had resources available to me to talk about choices, to talk about what it was I was REALLY doing, my life would be so different today. I have had multiple abortions not unlike many women in this country, in this state, perhaps even in this audience. I don't believe in my heart and soul that I would have made the same decisions, or that there is a woman, or man, out there, who, if they truly realized what an abortion REALLY is and what it does to their life would make that same decision.

That same horrible decision is being made over and over again by women and men and families who know not what they do. It was the age of feminism, of equal rights, I thought it was my body and it was my personal decision...how dare we tamper with what God has created and continues to create. HE is the author of life, NOT us.

I thought no one would be hurt by my decision...each and every abortion hurts each and every one of us...IT DESTROYS LIFE... There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about the decision I made but I have made peace with my God and I am using my decision to fight for those who cannot. Again, each and every abortion hurts each and every one of us. Our families, our daughters, our wives, our sisters, our husbands, our sons, our brothers, our society.

It is estimated that almost 40% of women between the ages of 18 and 45 have had at least one abortion.AN UNBELIEVABLE STATISTIC. We ARE our brother's keeper..we are expected to do something here....what is it that you are called to do???? WE must speak out for God's weakest and for those who cannot speak for themselves. If we don't do it, who will?

The after effects of abortion sometimes come out in other addictions, be it drinking or drugs or child abuse. There are so many different resources out there that post abortive women need to reach out to or anyone contemplating an abortion.....there is Project Rachel, Right to Life of Michigan, Silent No More National Campaign, Priests for Life, Pregnancy Counseling Centers such as Family Life Services and many others. There are many, loving, caring organizations whose focus is healing and mending women and men ...they don't need to work this out alone.

I invite you to visit the website of the National Memorial for the Unborn. The National Memorial for the Unborn in Chattanooga, Tennessee, used to be an abortion facility. Now it is dedicated to the memory of those who have been killed by abortion. Moms, Dads, and other family members of aborted babies can contact the memorial and have a plaque put up on the wall there, with an inscription in honor of the child.

MEN AND ABORTION

What is it that would have changed my mind, really? Involvement from the father of that child...without hesitation I say this. Had he said he would help, had he said to go ahead and have the baby I would have changed my mind in a heartbeat but he didn't. It was my problem, my pregnancy, my pain, my decision and He walked away. Let me ask you ladies and gentlemen,....do you know someone like that...who walked away, who took no responsibility, who was fearful of having the baby? Now many, many years later I am sure this man has suffered in some way and he may not understand it is partly because of the abortions but I know he has suffered. And I have forgiven him because I know I was forgiven by God,

Men tend to minimize their own feelings about abortion. I feel with men the first step is giving them the right to talk about it because they don't feel they have the RIGHT to do that. There is increasing recognition that abortion can have an emotional impact on women that is serious and in some cases long-lasting and for men also.. While there continues to be debate about the prevalence and intensity of psychological symptoms, a growing number of counselors and clergy are recognizing that abortion---like other forms of pregnancy loss---- can have long-term emotional consequences for both men and women.

What is less well known is that men, too, can suffer emotionally and spiritually as a result of the abortion. This can be confusing for men,.....He may think he is supposed to be supportive of the woman and may not offer his own opinions. So his feelings----whether they are relief, grief, anger, resentment, or shame—don't get processed and that can come out later. There is little literature on the psychological impact of abortion on men. One of the best resources I have found in my research is Rachel's Vineyard.

There needs to be a greater recognition that abortion is something inside our churches as well as outside. Being a community, being a church, being a friend, being an individual, who

speaks first to mercy and forgiveness might make it easier for us to speak the words of truth and justice our culture needs to hear about abortion. Jesus died so that even sins as terrible as ours could be forgiven. More people should know the power of God's forgiveness,.

To borrow a few thoughts from my friend, Ellen,.....and this is what Ellen has taught me about life....I used to think it was OK to be quiet about being pro life, and to not let too many people know that I believed in life issues, and that I was against abortion...afterall/ the issue is controversial. IT IS NOT OK TO BE QUIET...WE MUST BE LOUD ABOUT BEING PRO LIFE....If we don't do it, who will?

So ... we must speak for those who do not have a voice. That precious, vulnerable child in the womb has no voice! But we do -- you and I have a voice. It's our job to make sure the cry of the unborn is heard. That's why I'm here tonight. I want you to know, loud and clear from my lips to your ears, that my abortions were all very bad decisions. They did not liberate me or make me feel better about myself. Instead, each one weighed me down, gave me extra baggage to carry through life, and has made me realize that I truly desire to know and love the children I did not give birth to. I realize that I will never hold them in my arms or kiss them gently while I watch them sleep. I know I cannot change this. My heart breaks just thinking about it, but I don't want other women to make the same mistake -- the price is outrageously high. I want you to know that I stand ready to be a courageous prolife voice for women -- for men -- for the unborn. I ask for your prayers, but I also ask you to join me -- to stand for truth and forgiveness. Ask yourself, "what am I being called to do?" That's something you'll need to think and pray about. I can tell you from personal experience, however, that with God's help we can do great things.