

Mary Hutchinson's Testimony

(Founder of Cradle of Grace)

Each of us has events in our lives that define us. Some are happy times. The day we were saved. The day we were married. The day our child was born. Nothing was the same after that amazing day.

But for many of us, we have an event in our life that is more like a scar on our soul. It is a moment in time when a painful event happened that changed us.

My story is hard to tell because it is the hour of the greatest failure in my life.

But I have to share it because for the last six months, everywhere I have gone I have met women and men who have a scar just like mine. Their pain brought me here – I know there are many in this room that will relate to my story, and prayerfully, will find healing. Real healing. The kind of healing only Jesus can provide.

My scar festered for many years. All of those years, I was part of a loving church body; I was growing in my faith. But this was a sin I could not look at, the pain was too great, and so it never got any better.

That decision led me to years of pain and self-hate. But I don't want to get ahead of myself.

In the middle of a personal crisis, a charming older man began to tell me all the things a girl wants to hear, and I failed.

But I didn't just fail a little. I placed all the trust in him that I wanted to place in my father ...and in a husband, yes, even in God.

I became a person I hardly recognized. I compromised over and over in ways too sickening to detail. I was a shell of a person, lonely, bitter, scared and so isolated that I did not have a real friend in this world.

Then one morning I woke up sick. My body ached all over, and my stomach was rolling. I spent the first half of the day in the bathroom trying to figure out where I had picked up this awful bug.

By noon, it was better and I went to work. The next morning, the bug was back. By the third morning, I could not ignore the pattern. I went to the drug store and bought a pregnancy test.

I remember lying on the floor of my bedroom crying until I was throwing up. I was so alone, so scared. I had no money. This man would never help me. In fact, I would lose him.

I couldn't have a baby! I knew nothing about babies. I was irresponsible. I couldn't lose this man either. He was all that I had. I was so scared to be alone.

Abortion seemed the only answer. I knew it was wrong. I knew it was sin. No one convinced me that it was a clump of cells that had to be cleaned out. I knew it was a baby and I couldn't deal with a baby.

The man sent the money and a friend took me to the clinic. I knew I was not strong enough to go through with it unless I was asleep, there is no way I could have been awake as they sucked this little life outside of me. So I made him pay the extra fee so that I could be knocked out.

Even still, I woke crying, sobbing. My heart was so broken. I cried in the recovery room until they forced us to leave. I cried in the car all the way home. The woman who drove me – a paid employee – left me at home alone with some sleeping pills and a promise to check on me in the morning.

I closed the door to my house and locked it with the deadbolt. Then I made sure the backdoor was dead bolted too. I sat on the couch and took every pill in that bottle. Not sure it would be enough; I walked up the stairs and found other pill bottles. I took every pill I could find, and then walked back down to the living room.

To be honest, I am not sure what happened next. I remember someone calling and her realizing that my speech was slurred. I admitted taking the pills and soon she was at my door. She took me to the hospital and I passed out while getting in the car; I remember nothing until two days later when I awoke with a kind Christian doctor standing over me.

He told me that God still loved me, but I didn't believe it. He ministered to me for the weeks they kept me in the hospital, and though I was able to function when I was released, I was far from healed.

I went back to work, but now there were voices inside that I needed to quiet. Voices that condemned me. Voices that blamed me. It was too easy to go back to the man. When we were together, the voices stopped.

But they never went away. No, as soon as I was alone, the voices were back. I was so torn with guilt and shame that I was almost unable to function. Not one hour of one day went by without me thinking about the baby.

Then I was pregnant again. This one had a very different ending. I was sick of running. I was sick of what my life had become.

When I found out I was pregnant, it was the turning point in my life. I knew what I had to do and how to do it.

I cried out to the Lord to come back into my life as Lord and Savior. I knew I had made a mess too big for me to fix.

When I cried out to Him, and begged Him to come back into my life, to be the Lord and Savior of this mess I had made of my life, He was there. He was there in a way that was almost physical. I felt His presence. My spirit saw Him there.

I remember sitting on the cold tile of my bathroom floor and hugging my knees as I cried out, asking forgiveness.

These were different tears. These were not tears of anguish over being pregnant, they were tears of release.

With my eyes closed and my body rocking gently, I felt the arms of Jesus around me. I knew He would take care of me and this child.

Scriptures long ago hidden in my heart began to surface. The one I clung to promised:

1 John 1:9 (New International Version)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify (cleanse) us from all unrighteousness.

I prayed and confessed all my failures to my Heavenly Father. Then I got up and walked out of the room a changed person. I knew I had been given a second chance ... and I was so grateful I was overwhelmed. Yes, I was still scared, but I had a peace that passed all understanding that we—my baby and I—would be okay.

I can't tell you it was easy, but I can tell you that He was there for me every step of the way.

At the hour I made this discovery and this decision, I was bankrupt, I had no medical insurance, my rent was three months overdue. Mr. Wonderful had given me the money to have another abortion. For some reason—denial perhaps—he didn't think I'd really have this baby.

But the circumstances I handed God did not make it easy. In a series of events that can only be described as miraculous, He made a way.

I knew it was not enough to make a decision to come back to Christ; I needed the fellowship of believers to help me. It was hard coming back to church. But God surrounded me with people who loved me and helped me grow in the Lord.

A small group became my life line, and later I began to serve and give back to the church.

But for so many years, there was not a day that went by that I did not think about the baby I had aborted, about the sin I had committed. The guilt and shame at the time was so overwhelming that I couldn't face it.

The abortion became a scar that would not heal, the sin I could not forgive.

Six years ago I met a woman by the name of Lori Bakker. That meeting led to my healing and a friendship for life.

Lori knew more about abortion than I did. She had had five before she was 25 years old. The last one was botched, and the doctors accidentally left a part of the baby in her womb. It became infected and before she was 26, she had to have a total hysterectomy.

She told me of the breakthrough she had in her own life and healing and how she had taken this message to the church. Here is what she found:

In America, one out of every three women has had an abortion. In the church? The number is exactly the same.

And the pain doesn't end there. There are as many men in the church as women who have a hole in their heart from a woman who aborted their baby. Maybe they had no say in the decision; maybe they insisted the woman go through with this.

But today, they carry that pain in their heart. Their baby was killed. They didn't stop it. And now, they live with that, afraid, ashamed and embarrassed to tell anyone, even God.

And in church we don't talk about it, we don't preach about it; and so we put on our Sunday smile with our Sunday best and go to church.

But if you have had an abortion and you have not forgiven yourself, nor let God forgive you, then there is a wall between you and everything that happens at church.

That wall will cause you to do many unhealthy things. Some women become promiscuous. Others frigid. Some become overweight. Others anorexic. Some self-medicate with drugs or alcohol. Others live under a cloud of depression.

None of these are what God has for you.

Jesus said "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

Abortion is not the unpardonable sin, sexual sin is not the unpardonable sin, but it will prevent you from having abundant life unless you deal with it.

I had not dealt with it, and Lori took me through a process in what was actually a Memorial Service. That's right, it was sort of like a funeral service for my baby.

I am not going into the details of all that involved, but the service allowed me to finally grieve for what was a death in my family. That opened the door for God then to begin to work in me.

Let me walk you through what God showed me that day because I think it will help not only those of you who have had an abortion, but also any who have had a horrible thing done to them that seems impossible to get past.

First: I had to admit that I had sinned

That sounds pretty basic, but denial will cause you to block out many things.

Abortion is sin. This isn't a political statement but a statement of fact. Useless there is a rare medical situation, abortion is sin. God knit that baby in your womb and my womb has surely as He knit us in our own mother's wombs. He knew that baby even as God knew you before you were born.

When you take the life of another, it is sin. Sin is why God sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for us. We all have sinned and come short of the glory of the Lord. You are in good company here, we have all sinned, and this is a good place to do something about that sin.

When I started to confess, I found there was a host of sin in my life that needed to be put on the altar of forgiveness.

Second: you have to forgive.

It's obvious that you have to forgive yourself and the man.

But beyond that...who else? This is vital. Was there a girlfriend or relative that drove you there, encouraged this? What about the doctor? The nurses?

I found there were so many people who I was bitter towards. It went so far beyond the man involved. I had family members tell me this was the only option for me. I had a secretary that was afraid she would lose her job if I had a baby who nagged me non-stop.

And you know what, I was mad at the church. It's true. I was mad at the church because no one was there at the clinic offering me a way out, showing me photos that would change my mind.

You will never get past this until you identify and forgive everyone who "helped" you make this decision.

I know forgiveness is hard. It was hard even for the disciples. Jesus taught them in Luke 17: 3. He tells that not only do they have to forgive a brother that offends them, they have to forgive even if the same guy does the same darn thing seventy times in one day!

The disciples responded ...I think we will need more faith to forgive that much, that often, that completely!

It is in that setting where Jesus uttered these words:

He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this [sycamine] tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." Luke 17:6 (New International Version)

What the disciples needed even a small amount of faith for was to root out unforgiveness! Jesus painted quite a picture here. Most of us are very familiar with the first part. A grain of mustard seed is a very tiny thing.

But why did Jesus point to the Sycamine tree? Why did he use that in his illustration of this huge thing --unforgiveness?

Rick Renner in his book "Sparkling Gems of the Greek" explains it:

First: A sycamine tree has a large and very deep root structure. This was not a tree you could easily be rid of. It grew to a height of 30 feet and thrived in hot blistering weather. You could not kill it by cutting it off at the base -- it would just grow back! It was a tough tree to eradicate.

Think of your unforgiveness or bitterness like that tree.

Imagine it thriving in the heat of our busy lives, taking root beneath the surface of our lives and establishing itself as though it can never be moved.

That is what Jesus was saying...he was comparing our unforgiveness to this virtually unkillable tree!

But that is not all. The sycamine produced very bitter fruit. The sycamine and the mulberry tree look very much alike and both produce a fruit. Mulberry figs are sweet, delicious and therefore expensive. The sycamine tree produced a fruit that was so bitter it could not be eaten whole. The eater had to nibble on it a little at a time. No one could eat it at one sitting; it was just too tart and pungent.

Jesus lets us know that like the sycamine fruit, the fruit of unforgiveness is bitter, tart. Most people who are holding on to unforgiveness nibble on it a little at a time, over days, over weeks, over years.

Are you nibbling on that fruit? I sure was.

So let's go back to the scripture:

He replied, ***"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this [sycamine] tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."*** Luke 17:6 (New International Version)

God is commanding us to speak to our unforgiveness, our bitterness, and then something incredible will happen.

Can you imagine speaking to a huge tree, with huge roots and seeing it not just die or disappear, but being uprooted and planted in the sea?

This is so powerful because ... a tree cannot live in the sea. It is salt water. The tree has no chance at all of survival and haunting you again if it is cast into the sea.

To get over the pain of an abortion or any painful event in your life, you have to go for the roots. Those are the roots of unforgiveness.

God wants to forgive you today...and He wants you to forgive those who hurt you.

He stands ready and waiting to forgive us and to heal the scar on our soul. He says, "Come to me all that are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Today can be a new defining moment. A time that you will look back on as the day God set you free.

Pray with me:

Heavenly Father,

We come to you in Jesus' name. We are so thankful that you sent your son Jesus to die for our sins on Calvary's cross.

We are a people in need of a Savior. We have blown it so many times.

Father, we come to you for forgiveness, for healing, for the faith to forgive others.

If there are those here today whom you are speaking to right now, I ask that you give them the strength that they need to allow themselves to be ministered to. Right now.

Thank you for loving us, providing a way for us. In Jesus' name.