

## Deliver Me

by Erin Di Paolo

I was twenty-one years old, pregnant, and devastated. This couldn't be happening. I never dreamed I'd be in this position. Afraid, desperate, and alone, I made the only choice I thought I had.

As soon as I could, I made an appointment, went to a clinic, and did something I never thought I was capable of. I took the life of my own child, fully aware that's what I was doing. But I was not aware of the consequences my action would bring.

When I think of the shame of it all, it makes my heart sick. I lived with my parents, and they had no idea I was pregnant. The secrecy of my pregnancy and abortion brought me incredible guilt and shame. I became depressed and isolated myself even from my fiancé. Our relationship spiraled downward and never recovered. I partially blamed him, yet I knew there was no one to blame but myself.

Within days after my relationship with the baby's father ended, God brought me into a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. He delivered me from sin to salvation. But in areas of my living and thinking, He still had some delivering to do.

In an effort to justify my decision, I became even more outspoken on a woman's right to choose. The pain of the abortion remained, but I pushed it aside. I had not truly received God's forgiveness for this sin, and I had not forgiven myself. So even after I became a Christian, I remained pro-choice. I continued to live in denial.

But God would not leave me there.

As a new Christian, I became a devoted listener to Chuck Swindoll's radio program, *Insight for Living*. Every month I would give a donation and request the book offer for that month. It was less than a year after I became a Christian when, much to my dismay, one month I received a different book than what I had requested. I received Chuck Swindoll's book *Sanctity of Life: The Inescapable Issue*. Was this a joke? I wondered why the ministry would send me *this* book by mistake. Why could I not escape this issue? I hadn't ordered it. I didn't *want* it! But God was not joking.

I determined I would never read that book. But, of course, once I said "never," I'm sure God just sat back and laughed. Hadn't He heard the word never from me before? A short time passed before I picked up that book, and then I couldn't put it down. It was a wonderful book! I thought it would bring condemnation, but instead it brought healing. I remember it like it was yesterday. It was as if Christ Himself reached down from heaven, put His arms around me and said, "I died for *all* your sins. I love you."

I sobbed and sobbed. As I did, I felt this sweet sense of peace wash over me. I had been forgiven the sin I thought was unforgivable. In the New Testament, Romans 8:1 says, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." I genuinely understand what that verse means and I rejoice in the truth of it, for surely if there was a sin that would condemn me to hell it would be this one. But God says otherwise.

I told God I would do whatever He wanted me to do in the pro-life arena. Fifteen years ago I volunteered at a crisis pregnancy

center in Denver, Colorado. This center ministers to women and men in crisis pregnancies and who are suffering the aftermath of abortion.

Several years ago I attended a Christian post-abortion support group offered by the pregnancy center. I really didn't think I needed it, but I decided to go to minister to other women who needed to deal with their issues. I didn't think I had any issues left to deal with. But going through that group opened my eyes to pain and anger I didn't realize I had. It truly set me free! Participating in the group enabled me to also help many other women who were still in bondage, refusing to be set free, or not even knowing how to go about it.

We held a memorial service for our babies, complete with a pastor, Scripture reading, and music. We named our babies. Their names were read out loud—one by one. It was a beautiful tribute to the lives of our babies and sweet closure for all of us who grieved our losses.

It was awesome to witness each woman work through the grieving process and accept God's forgiveness while at the same time forgiving herself. Sometimes the hardest obstacle post-abortive women face is forgiving themselves, yet not doing so cheapens God's grace. If He forgives us, how can we possibly think we can't forgive ourselves?

If it had not been for my experience with that Denver pregnancy center, I do not know where I would be today. I'm grateful to God I don't have to find out. My abortion was many years ago, and I still grieve it. However I now know true forgiveness, and I know I will one day see my baby in heaven.

***22% of all pregnancies in America (excluding miscarriages) end in abortion.<sup>1</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> "Facts on Induced Abortion In the United States," Guttmacher Institute "In Brief," May 2010, 1.

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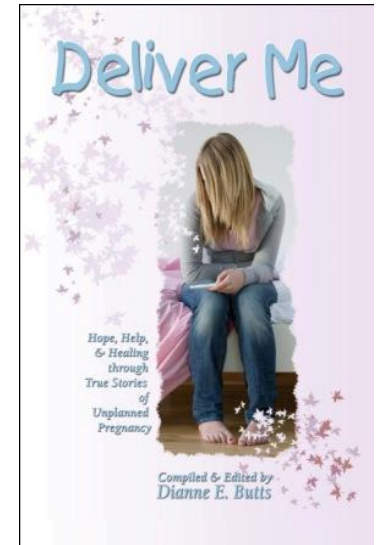
"For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living." Psalm 116:8-9

Excerpted from:

*Deliver Me: Hope, Help, & Healing through  
True Stories of Unplanned Pregnancy.*

By Dianne E. Butts © 2011

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ISBN: 978-0-9831649-0-6

\$14.99 Paperback

Nonfiction / Women's Issues

5¼ x 8" 236 pages

Available from Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com,  
SignedbytheAuthor.com.

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Taylor.

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