

My life started its downward spiral at the tender young age of 15.

I grew up with a Lutheran background. Going to church and Sunday School every Sunday with mom and dad.

In Lutheran religion you attended confirmation classes at the age of 12-14. This confirmation class is a graduation of such from childhood into adulthood within the church. You can take communion after my confirmation class graduation my dad informed my mom he was not going to church anymore. So, I openly said if dad's not going, I'm not going either.

That's why I say my life took a downward spiral—looking back I see the de-gretion – although wait, listen to my whole story because there is a pro-gretion – our God never gave up on me.

I had been experimenting with drugs and drinking already with the group I hung out with at school. That progressed to ditching classes to go to daytime parties at someone's house.

By the time I was in my sophomore year in High School I was very heavy into drinking and drugs. It was only by God's grace at that time that sex and promiscuity were not a part of it.

The Lord was really trying to get a hold of me because at that point I decided I didn't want anymore of the drugs, drinking and parties. I really wanted to stop all that & put my best foot forward in school.

I didn't know how to stop hanging around the people I was hanging around and make friends with people from "the other side." What I mean by that is when I went to school you were either one of the druggies or one of the rah-rahs and no one ever crossed the line successfully from one to the other.

He only way I knew how to do this was to quit school. So, right before my 15<sup>th</sup> birthday I told my parents I wanted to go to the other school in our district but didn't give them a reason why, or I would quit school.

I quit school. Found a full time job at the local Arby's by being and saying I was 16, which was the legal age for working. Worked, lived at home, never saw any of my so-called drug friends from school. Then met what I thought was the boy of my dreams.

I was 17. He was 19. We started dating in April – by June I was no longer a virgin. The doctor had placed me on birth control when I was 16 to regulate my periods, so we didn't have to worry about pregnancy.

By the following year right before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday he asked me if I wanted to get pre-engaged and move in together to see if we could get along before getting married.

What part of that sentence did I hear? Getting married. So, on my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, I informed my parents once again that I was moving in with my boyfriend.

We moved in together – me with the intentions of getting engaged and married, him with other ideas.

The year went by and our lease was almost up – I hadn't heard a thing from him about getting engaged or married so I decided to bring it up.

I ended up moving out with him and back in with my parents. Praise the Lord the allowed me back.

Our relationship continued off and on over the next four years, and we continued being sex partners. I dabbled back in drugs and drinking – always seemed to find friends that like that stuff.

I am now 23 and he's 25.

In the summer of 1982 I became pregnant. I was thrilled to be because my doctor –remember I've been going to her since I was 15 – told me I could never get pregnant. My hearts desire was to be a wife and mother.

Now, I need to back up just a bit here.

I was starting to get into exercising and healthy eating in my early 20's and I didn't like the idea of taking the pill anymore, besides that the doctor said I could never get pregnant anyways and they were expensive on my tight budget. So I don't remember at what point I did but I stopped taking them and didn't inform him because I didn't think I could get pregnant.

Well, I did. My doctor had given me the name of an abortion clinic (without my asking) to take care of this problem.

Driving home from the doctors that summer day in late August I still remember the feelings of being excited, yet scared.

Excited that I could get pregnant, scared at what he would say. But we'd talked about getting married someday and having kids so I knew he wanted them.

After I got home dread crept up inside me. You see, I already had 2 cousins that had children out of wed-lock and I saw how my grandfather, my dad's father, had never spoken to or acknowledged them. Could I take that from my grandfather and my own father?

I became very afraid as I called my boyfriend to tell him the news. So in one weekend I was engaged to be married and aborting my first child.

The abortion clinic was everything you hear it is. The word BABY was never spoken to me. We were just taking care of a spot, a little spot of tissue – nothing more. It's a quick procedure – no pain – no after effects – you can even go home that same day.

I was non-functional that day. I remember sitting at the kitchen table in my boyfriend's mom's kitchen and asking the baby to please forgive us – it's mom and dad, we're sorry...

Going through the procedure was very lonely, cold, dark – the nurses and the doctor didn't want to look at you or even speak to you.

As the doctor suctioned out my baby I looked down and saw the container with the clear plastic tube and the blood and matter going down that tube – losing life.

I remember it hurting a great deal even though they said it wouldn't. After all I now had a wedding to plan and once we were married we would have more children.

Six years went by and we talked about kids, but it was always after we do this or that, then one day he informed me he was leaving for a six month sabbatical.

Six months turned into a year and again I thought, why am I taking these birth control pills, he's not here and I'm not having sex with anyone.

I stopped taking the pill and he came back.

In the early spring of 1989 I became pregnant for the second time.

This time I thought, we're married and I know he will want this baby.

It didn't work that way. I told him and he said abortion again. This time I fought him tooth and nail. I was older and wiser and I knew that was a baby inside me.

His last sentence to me before I again gave in and choose abortion was, "fine, if you want to have this baby you are going to have to go have it by yourself."

So, I convinced myself I was saving my marriage this time.

It was even harder to go to the abortion clinic, and stay on that table, because I knew what I was doing – killing my baby.

In the summer of 1992, I walked out, and in the fall of 1992, Praise the Lord – I finally turned to Him – the One that had been trying to get a hold of me through out my life I became born again one day in the Fall of 1992 when I asked for forgiveness and ask Jesus Christ into my heart—I still hadn't asked for forgiveness of my two abortions – I was still in denial – but my life had finally turned from the downward spiral! Praise the Lord.

I tried reconciling my marriage because I now understood God's true design for marriage, but he asked for a divorce and it was granted April 1993.

I went through Christian counseling and divorce recovery counseling still keeping the two secrets I had.

In winter of 1993 the Lord lead me to Naperville Bible Church. The first Sunday I went there, along with the handout flyer was a newsletter with an article written by Elizabeth Verchio, director of Victims Of Choice, a ministry to the second victim of abortion.

As I read this article about post abortion syndrome and the hope and healing you could have through Jesus Christ and new hope sparked up in me. God could forgive me!

It took me a full 24 hours before I picked up the phone to call Elizabeth. The person that me on the other side of that phone line was compassionate and understanding and loving. She showed me a love that I'd never experienced before.....

Well, we set up to meet and through the next few months, Elizabeth showed me how not only how God forgave me, but also how to forgive myself, my ex-husband, and even the doctors and nurses and all other "connectors" to this tragedy.

Praise God! I stand before you a healed, forgive woman who also has forgiven.

The Lord is still working on me even through writing this down. He had revealed some other things in me that I needed to lay at his feet, but .... By His Grace alone and I understand that more and more that I am here today the victory is mine because the victory is His!

Amen and Amen!