

Abortion as a Grief Experience

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국문초록

오늘날 여러 가지 상황에서 낙태가 일어나고 있으며 수많은 태어나지 않은 영혼들이 목숨을 잃고 거리의 쓰레기 더미로 버려지고 있다.

원하지 않았던 낙태를 했던 사람들은 더욱 상한 심령을 가지고 슬퍼하게 된다. 슬퍼하는 자들은, 그리스도로 말미암아, 그들의 영혼 속에서, 죽은 자의 부활을 경험 할 때, 위로와 소망이 있다.

낙태는 산모의 생명이 위급 할 때만 고려됨이 바람직하다. 원하지 않은 아이는 낙태대신에 입양 등 여러 가지 사회적, 국가적 지원체제를 잘 활용 해야 한다.

낙태의 신학적 측면에서 출애굽기 21장 22에서는 "사람이 서로 싸우다가 아이 밴 여인을 다쳐 낙태케 하였으나 다른 해가 없으면 그 남편의 청구대로 벌금을 내되 재판장의 판결을 좇아 낼 것이라"고 했다. 이는 마치 아이의 생명은 어머니의 생명과 같이 가치 있는 것으로 보지 않은듯하나, 이 말씀의 기본 뜻은 고의적인 낙태는 생각할 수 없다는 것이다. 예레미야 1장 5절에서 하나님은, "내가 너를 복중에 짓기 전에 너를 알았고, 네가 태에서 나오기 전에 너를 구별" 하였다고 하셨다. 우리의 생명은 그리스도와 함께 하나님 안에 감추어져 있고 그리스도는 우리의 생명이 되신다(골 3:3-4).

낙태의 심리적 측면에는, 낙태의 상황에 따라 차이는 있으나 대부분 죄책감과 불안, 우울증 및 분노, 몸의 한 부분이 절단된 느낌과 몸의 불편함이 동반된 슬픔에 빠질 가능성이 많다. 낙태로 슬픔을 경험할 때, 먼저 부정적인 감정을 버리고, 그리스도 안에서 참 자기를 발견하며, 죽은 아이와의 본능적인 결합에서 자유하며, 영혼 깊이 죽은 자의 부활을 경험하며, 관계를 새롭게 한다. 정서적 관계적 면에서 의미를 재발견해야 한다. 그리스도는 성령 안에서 우리의 모든 죄책감과 우울증을 거두어 주며 슬픔은 기쁨으로 변하게 하여 주신다. 영혼의 어두운 밤이 지나면 그리스도의 영광이 비치는 새로운 삶을 살게 된다.

낙태를 생각하거나 경험하는 여성들을 돌보며, 그리스도의 마음을 품고, 상담해 주는 것이 유익하다. 낙태를 꼭 해야만 할 경우 남편과 아내, 온 가족 그리고 의사와 성직자가 참석한 가운데 완전한 의견타진을 거쳐서 하나님의 뜻 안에서 모든 것이 이루어 지도록 해야 한다.

슬픔에 빠진 이들은 모든 고통을 주님 앞에 가지고 가서 정직하게 애통한 마음으로 기도할 때 성령 안에서 치유 변화가 일어난다.

“하나님은 죽은 자의 하나님이 아니요, 산 자의 하나님이시라 하나님에게는 모든 사람이 살았느니라”(눅 20:38).

중심단어 : 낙태, 슬픔, 신학, 심리, 상담

Introduction

People who undergo an unwanted abortion have a broken spirit. Their hearts are stricken and withered like grasses(Ps.102:4). Yet, from their heart, the springs of life flow(Proov.4:23). Our dilemma is that “The human spirit will endure sickness; but a broken spirit-who can bear?”(Prov.18:14).

The bereaved needs to experience resurrection of the deceased within their souls and spirits through

Jesus Christ who is the resurrection and life.

Since Jesus Christ is our life and our “life is hidden with Christ in God”(Col.3:3-4), even abortion cannot endanger our eternal life. Our Savior Jesus Christ gives us peace as he says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me”(Jn14:1). “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit”(Ps.34:18).

I. Biblical and Theological Aspects of Abortion.

From the beginning, the Christian Church has regarded abortion as a serious sin whereas pagans thought that the lives of slaves and of infants were not of any special value.¹⁾ The only reference to abortion in the Old Testament

is in Ex. 21:22, which refers to a man who accidentally hurts a woman so that he terminates her pregnancy. The implication is that deliberate termination of pregnancy would be unthinkable.

In his book, *Abortion: The Agonizing Decision*, David R. Mace writes that one of the main controversies surrounding abortion in the early church concerned when the unborn child received a human soul. Some Hebrews thought that only when the child was born and took his first breath did he become truly human and possess a soul. On the other hand, among some early Church fathers, “for over 600 years it was believed that males received theirs on the fortieth day after conception but females had to wait for 80 days!”²⁾

R.F.R. Gardner points out that miscarriages are not buried, are not named, and are not(except in the Roman communion) baptized.³⁾ The sense that the unsuccessful pregnancy is ephemeral is conveyed well by David in one of the Psalms: “Let them vanish like water that runs away... like the untimely birth that never sees the sun” (Psalm 58:7-8). In Exodus 21:22-25 it seems that the life of a fetus is not as valuable as that of the mother:⁴⁾

When, in the occurrence of a brawl, a man knocks against a pregnant woman so that she has a miscarriage but suffers no further hurt, then the offender must pay whatever the woman's husband demands after assessment.

There is, however, a theological difficulty here. We read in the Bible of God's interest in a person before his or her birth. Solomon wrote, “Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb, so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything” (Ecclesiastes 11:5, NRSV). The matter cannot be settled by pushing God's interest back to conception, for to Jeremiah the Lord said, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you for my own” (Jer.1:5). The Psalmist acknowledges: “Thy hands made me and fashioned me” (119:73). David reflects on the amazing way God “knit” his body” in the secret place.” Before birth, “Your eyes

saw my substance, being yet unformed” (Ps.139:13-16).

In the Church Dogmatics, Barth allows abortion only to save the mother's life.⁵⁾ For him, the personal relationship with God is always the decisive factor.

A second way God relates personally to the unborn is in preparing them as individuals for a specific calling. Jacob was given preeminence over Esau, though “not yet born” (Romans 9:11). Abortion is so difficult and complex an issue that in order to discuss it, we need to ask for wisdom from God. Dr. Alice Thompson at “The Abortion Conference” reminded us of the maxim, ‘there was no law without exceptions’ :

Just as the Church has had to make exceptions to the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ in time of war, so exceptions should be permitted to women in times of crises in their individual lives.⁶⁾

I think a valid exception would be in the scenario where child delivery could very likely lead to the death of the mother. Some women abort when they are pregnant with a lethally malformed infant.

Another complex case was such as a pregnancy by a robber. A lady checked in a Hotel room. Then a robber who disguised himself as a hotel worker knocked on her door. When she opened her door, he ran into her room, raped her and left her pregnant. It would be for the best if the infant is put up for adoption if she does not want to have her baby.

2. Psychological Aspect of Abortion

Erik H. Erikson and G. L. Bibring saw pregnancy as a development crisis for the personality of women.⁷⁾ How a woman passes through this crisis will depend upon the biological conditions of her pregnancy, which varies from woman to woman, as well as upon the whole social, psychological, and cultural context of her past, present, and projected future life.⁸⁾

The result of abortion immediately reveals a clear dichotomy--the data presented indicate that the decision to abort a fetus has either severe psychological ramifications⁹⁾ or none at all.¹⁰⁾ Miscarriage may cause psychiatric illness whereas therapeutic abortion may not cause any psychiatric illness. I imagine that whether the abortion is intended or not, there is the possibility of a guilt response or of psychological depression, which is a consideration of some importance in making psychological judgments. Paul Tournier has stated that "there is no grave beside which a flood of guilt feelings does not assail in the mind."¹¹⁾ Guilt-anxiety can be observed in grief: first, as a conscious and articulated subjective experience; second, as hostility turned inward and observed as depression.¹²⁾ Ekbal found that the guilt was greatest in women influenced by others toward abortion and least in those women who wanted an abortion themselves. Our guilt can be erased only through the Holy Spirit who liberates us from all sin and guilt in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Michael wrote that many women are afraid to confess their abortion experience, either out of ignorance or fear.¹³⁾ Some mothers have a hard time bonding with a child after they have had an abortion; others are overprotective and have the need to be "perfect" mothers to prove their worth.

Characteristics of the grieving person include: 1) Somatic distress, i.e., sighing, autonomic and gastrointestinal disturbances, fatigue, shortness of breath, loss of appetite, weight loss, and palpitations; 2) Preoccupation with the image of the lost person, talking about and idealization of the lost person; 3) guilt feelings, i.e., regrets for things said or not said, done or not done before the loss. with self-recrimination; 4) Feelings of anger and hostility, i.e., anger toward the caregivers, the survivors, one's self, to the lost person; and 5) Change in normal conduct, i.e., missing work, working compulsively, drinking, etc. Kavanaugh outlined seven stages of grief: (1) shock and denial (2) disorganization (3) violent emotions (4) guilt (5) loss and loneliness (6) relief (7) re-establishment.¹⁴⁾

Davidson studying 1200 bereaved adults who lost children, developed a four-dimensional process. His phases included: (1) shock and numbness, (2)

searching and yearning, (3) disorientation, and (4) reorganization.¹⁵⁾

In his study of the grief process, Colin Murray Parkers focused on several of its major aspects:¹⁶⁾ (1) Grief can be looked upon as a process of realization by which an individual moves from denial to acceptance of the loss (2) There is a component of alarm in loss, such as anxiety, restlessness (3) One might be compelled to search for the lost individual in some form (4) Anger and guilt are common elements of the grief process (5) The person often suffers from feelings of internal loss of self or mutilation. Symptoms of severe grief include depression, nervousness, fear of nervous breakdown, feelings of panic, nightmares, and headaches.¹⁷⁾

According to Psychology Reports (1994), in the Netherlands, the allowable limit for termination of pregnancy is 24 weeks. Nevertheless, a considerable number of pregnant women who are carrying a severely or lethally malformed infant appear to find opportunities for induced delivery, which indicates a gap between legislation and medical practice. In a group of thirty women who underwent induced deliveries after they had been informed of a lethal fetal anomaly, eighteen women reported that this was the outcome of a clear decision process and twelve reported that they had no choice:

Eighteen women(60%) seemed to have perceived control¹⁸⁾ over the event of induced delivery, for instance by stating: 'I wished to have the pregnancy terminated, because it was useless to wait any longer.' Twelve women (40%)expressed a lack of control as exemplified by the statement: 'What were my motives? I did not have any choice!'

Many women seem to be unaffected by an induced abortion. But they may grieve as they become old and feel lonesome. Some psychiatrists believe this emotional numbness is also an adverse reaction, meriting psychiatric attention.¹⁹⁾ The unique factors complicating bereavement in infant and child loss are the incompatibility of the two simultaneously occurring psychological processes of detachment and attachment. Esther Harding states in her

book on maternity, *The Way of All Women*:

In many women, love of the offspring remains an animal like quality, which cannot be called love of the child, of the person at all. The child represents to the mother a little piece of herself which has become partly separated and which she passionately loves on account of the still unbroken bond with herself.²⁰⁾

Harding adds that the need for differentiation between the child and mother is crucial to the resolution of grief. It is accomplished with the mother's release from identification with the good-bad maternal instinct.

3. Ministering to those who suffer from abortion

Many women make the decision to abort in haste and relative social isolation. Counseling prior to the abortion to explore ambivalent feelings and delineate alternatives will greatly benefit the woman who seeks abortion. David Mace, emphasizing non-directive counseling, says: "Counselors need to speak of the need of the counselee to get in touch with their real feelings and to make their own decisions."²¹⁾ For the abortion decision, Mace gives some guidelines for the perplexed woman: 1) define your problem 2) understand your situation 3) interpret your feelings 4) know the facts 5) examine your options 6) make up your mind. Mace says that "for true decision, mind and heart must be brought into harmony," because the final decision shouldn't be made in terms of reason alone. The heart too has its reason.²²⁾ More specifically, the counselor needs to encourage a woman to tell her own story and to give free expression to her feelings. Then, the Counselor should help the woman to examine the feelings she has now been able to recognize and express. Four general emotional states occur frequently--fear, anger, guilt, and depression, which are all closely interconnected. She needs to ask herself, and try to answer, just what is she afraid of, or angry and

guilty about. The woman should now be ready for the process of decision making.²³⁾

Also, in case of any abortion, it should be talked about between wife and husband as well as extended families including clergy persons. There should be no external pressures for the abortion. Let them have their own destiny according to the will of God.

Diane Cole in "It Might Have Been: Mourn the Unborn," writes that providing information is another important component. Physicians and nurses should be able to answer questions concerning the causes of the miscarriage and what the outlook for future pregnancy might be.²⁴⁾

Above all, we all need to know that all lives come from God. Whatever we do in this life, we will be judged by the Lord on judgment Day.

National support organizations need to act as advocates for parents in the aftermath of a pregnancy loss. Their educational efforts and hospital programs helped medical personnel become more aware of the need that parents may have to see or hold the lost child--particularly if the fetus is more fully developed--so that a fantasy is replaced with a tangible memory. Other rituals from naming the child to memorial services are also encouraged. Giving something tangible belonging to the lost child is also recommended. Finally Cole says the following:

Although nothing can replace the pregnancy that was lost, in learning to accept that fact, women and men can help each other to look to the future with realism and hope. And in the end, perhaps, that might be the one universal lesson from any loss, at whatever age.

According to Parkes, grief can be both illness and strength. Just as broken bones may end up stronger than unbroken ones, so the experience of grieving can strengthen and bring maturity to those who have previously been protected from misfortune.²⁵⁾

In his book *The Dynamics of Grief: Its Sources, Pain and Healing*, David Switzer identified the needs of bereaved individuals, which encompasses the

women who have undergone abortions. He describes their needs for the:(1) release of negative emotions (2) affirmation of the self (3) breaking libidinal ties (4) resurrection of the deceased within the self of the bereaved (5) renewal of relationship (6) rediscovery of meaning on both an emotional and a relational level.²⁶⁾ The possibility of psychological result in the case of abortion would be greatly reduced if adequate pre-abortion counseling were available.²⁷⁾

There is a natural response to individuals who have suffered the loss of an important person, of a part of the body, or the hope of a future, but there are other griefs which might not even be recognized in the barrage of condemnation.²⁸⁾

In ministering to post abortion sufferers, it is important to let mourners tell their stories especially in the form of remembering. Parkes, in *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*, says the following: "Memories were not uniformly painful, and if recollections in early stages of bereavement gave pain, happier memories often came to replace them."²⁹⁾ On the other hand, if we have painful memories, we can also bring those pains to God in candid, passionate, transformative prayer in lament. We cling to the promise of God in the future if not the present. From there we might find release and freedom.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (Jer.1:5). God knows all of our days even before we are conceived. Only in God can every soul find the meaning and purpose of his or her being. Whether ripped and killed by the knife in the womb, or inflicted with a fatal disease, every soul may rest peacefully in the hand of God, our Father. "He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken" (Ps.34:20).

God is the God of living. "Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive."(Lk20:38).

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[Endnotes]

- 1) David R. Mace, *Abortion: The Agonizing Decision* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 54.
- 2) Mace, *Abortion*, 55-63.
- 3) In the Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, miscarriage is defined as "expulsion of a human fetus before it is viable and esp. between the 12th and 28th weeks of gestation."
- 4) For the present discussion, in a neutral position, the terminology of 'fetus' or 'baby' will be used interchangeably.
- 5) Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 25.
- 6) Mace, *Abortion*, 97.
- 7) Erik H. Erikson, "Growth and Crisis of the Healthy Personality," C. Kluckhohn, H.A.

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- 8) Daniel Callahan, *Abortion: Law, Choice and Morality* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1970), 53.
 - 9) Nancy E. Adler, "Emotional Responses of Women Following Therapeutic Abortion," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 45 (1975):446-54., C.M. Burnell, "Post Abortion Group Therapy," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 129 (1972): 220-23., Judith S. Wallerstein, "Psychological Sequelae of Therapeutic Abortion in Young Unmarried Women," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 27(1972): 828-32.
 - 10) R. Illsley, "Psychosocial Aspects of Abortion: A Review of Issues and Needed Research," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 53 (1976): 83-106.,D. Jacobs, " A Prospective Study on the Psychological Effects of Therapeutic Abortion," *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 15 (1974): 423-34.
 - 11) Paul Tournier, *Guilt and Grace* (New York: Harper, 1962), 189.
 - 12) David K. Switzer, *The Dynamics of Grief* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 144.
 - 13) Michael T. Mannion, *Abortion & Healing* (MO: Sheed & Ward, 1986), 24.
 - 14) Judith A. Savage, *Mourning Unlived Lives* (IL: Chiron Publications, 1989), 32.
 - 15) Savage, *Mourning Unlived Lives*, 35.
 - 16) Colin Murray Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life* (New York: International Universities, 1972), 16-18.
 - 17) Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*, 21.
 - 18) Perceived control means perception of contingency between one's behavior and reactions in the environment and does not necessarily correspond with the objective circumstances.
 - 19) Anne Speckhard, *Psychosocial stress following Abortion* (MO: Sheed & Ward, 1987), 4.
 - 20) Speckhard, *Psychosocial stress following Abortion*, 4.
 - 21) Mace, *Abortion*, 124.
 - 22) Mace, *Abortion*, 137-38.
 - 23) Mace, *Abortion*, 117.
 - 24) Diane Cole in "It Might Have Been: Mourn the Unborn," *Psychology Today* 21 (Jul. 1987): 64-73.
 - 25) Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*, 5.
 - 26) David Switzer, *The Dynamics of Grief: Its Sources, Pain, and Healing* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 196-202.
 - 27) Julia. Upton, "The Hidden Grief of Abortion," *Pastoral psychology* 31 (1982): 13-24.
 - 28) Upton, "The Hidden Grief of Abortion," 13-24.
 - 29) Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*, 49.

【 Abstract 】

Abortion as a Grief Experience Abstract

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People who undergo an unwanted abortion have a broken spirit. The bereaved needs to experience resurrection of the deceased within their souls and spirits through Jesus Christ who is the resurrection and life.

From biblical and theological aspects of abortion, the only reference to abortion in the Old Testament is in Ex. 21:22, which refers to a man who accidentally hurts a woman so that he terminates her pregnancy. The implication is that deliberate termination of pregnancy would be unthinkable. The Lord said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you for my own" (Jer.1:5).

From psychological aspect of abortion, there is the possibility of a guilt response or of psychological depression including somatic distress, guilt feelings, feelings of anger and hostility and change in normal conduct.

People who undergo abortion need the (1) release of negative emotions (2) affirmation of the self (3) breaking libidinal ties (4) resurrection of the deceased within the self of the bereaved (5) renewal of relationship (6) rediscovery of meaning on both an emotional and a relational level. If we have painful memories, we can also bring those pains to God in candid, passionate, transformative prayer in lament. Only in God can every soul find the healing, meaning and purpose of his or her being. God is the God of living. "Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive" (Lk20:38).

Key words: Abortion, Grief, Theology, Psychology, Counseling