

*Newborn Promise Podcast*

*Episode 13: Spiritual Healing After Abortion*

Audra Haney: Thanks for tuning in to The Newborn Promise Podcast, a production of Graham Blanchard, Incorporated. You are listening to an interview with Jill Cooper called Finding Healing After Abortion. For today's show notes, transcript, and more information about your newborn promise project, please visit [grahamblanchard.com](http://grahamblanchard.com). Welcome to The Newborn Promise Podcast. I am Audra Haney and today we want to talk about remembering. The second chapter of our book, Your Newborn Promise Project, is actually titled "Remember," and we talk about how important it is to remember God's faithfulness, His faithful acts to His children throughout history and to us as individuals, when we know and love Him. We discuss how in this way, the past is a great friend to the future. However, we also know that being pregnant and bringing a new life into the world or into your family can unearth painful and unexpected memories from our past. For Jill Cooper, starting a family in her thirties brought up the painful memory of an abortion after an unplanned pregnancy in her twenties.

In today's episode, Jill shares with us how God revealed the painful emotions of that decision after years of burying them deep inside. She also shares how He set her free from condemnation and shame, and helped her step into new purpose in life. We know that Jill's story is all too common today, and if you share a similar past, we want you to know that today's episode is a safe place, free of judgment, and full of a God waiting to heal you. We know these emotions may be hard to revisit, but our prayer for you today is that whether you are just discovering Christ or just need to remember His amazing mercy and work on the cross, our prayer is that today would be a landmark day for you, a day to look back and remember as a turning point in your journey to freedom, and a day of complete and total healing for you and your entire family. Jill, your testimony really starts when you are a teenager, and were searching for love. Describe that period of your life for us.

Jill Cooper: Like many people, I come from a dysfunctional family. My father was an alcoholic, and the love was not there, especially from my father. As a teenager, I became promiscuous, and searched for love in all the wrong places, turned to drugs at the time, and I truly did not have a good self-worth, or self-concept. That kind of led me to a lot of wrong choices in my teenage years, and it continued through even in college.

Audra Haney: Jill, did you feel like you were able to find God's love in church?

Jill Cooper: I was raised in a church that was teaching that God, we feared God, and I felt like I could never be good enough, so I therefore didn't try. I just felt like I was never going to be good enough, so I didn't live with God in my life from the time I was eight until I was probably 30, because He didn't have a place in my life.

Audra Haney: How did that affect the decisions that you were making at that time in your life?

Jill Cooper: Without God in our lives, we don't have a basis of moral character. Our values that stem from God, they're not there. Anything goes, and so I was ... My philosophies of life were created by what I heard from my peers, and in culture, and so all kinds of issues come up when you just don't have that guidance. I didn't have that guidance from anybody even around me. My friends weren't giving me good feedback, and I did feel like anything went, so I just made up my own rules about life, and that led me to a lot of dark places in my life.

Audra Haney: In your mid-twenties, you found yourself in an unplanned pregnancy situation. If you don't mind, just tell us about the circumstances behind that.

Jill Cooper: I was living with my boyfriend, and I was taking birth control, and I changed birth control devices, and I became pregnant. At first I was a little excited about it, but then when I came home to tell him, he was totally against it. He was in the middle of his college career, and a pregnancy didn't have any place there. He wanted me to have an abortion, and the friends that I had, and even my mother at the time, felt that that was a good decision, to have the abortion. I felt like it was a clump of tissues, and so it wasn't a baby yet, so I could convince myself that was an okay situation, a good decision for me at the time.

Audra Haney: After you followed through with that abortion, even though the culture had shaped your opinion of the pregnancy, what emotions were you feeling?

Jill Cooper: At first, I was relieved that the crisis was over, that I didn't have to worry about it, and I even celebrated a little bit, but throughout my relationship with that man, I even became ... We got married later. I still had a lot of anger toward him for pressing me into that situation, for pressuring me in essence into that situation. I just pushed it down. I became more involved in drinking and drugs. I didn't want to think about it for many, many years. I did not really think about the abortion at all, because it was over, and I thought it didn't have any issues because of the abortion.

Audra Haney: How are the things that you are feeling deep inside, even when we stuff emotions deep inside, they still have a way of coming to the surface. How are those manifesting in your life, and really affecting your relationships?

Jill Cooper: I think I distance myself from people. I shut down in a lot of ways emotionally, spiritually, especially. I didn't seek God even at that time, even though I was going through a lot of problems with my marriage, and friendships, because I didn't feel like He was one to run to. There was this built up anger and bitterness, and a little hopelessness that things would even ever get better.

Audra Haney: What eventually led you back to the church? You said you came back to the church in your thirties, so what prompted that decision?

Jill Cooper: It was a divorce. I had left my husband. Obviously there were years and years of bitterness and anger, and we just never were able to make that work, but even though it was my decision to leave the relationship and have a divorce, I felt like a failure. I even went deeper into darkness, and just a lot of partying after that, and so there was one night that I just ... It was really bad. The next morning my friend said, "Well, let's go to church," and it was even in a church like one that I had grown up in, but I met Jesus there, and I realized how much I had messed up. I guess it was that rock bottom place for me that I reached out to God at that point in that service, and from there, He has totally covered me, and led me, and kept me going to know Him more, and to realize that He was the only hope I would have.

Audra Haney: If you don't mind, just dive a little deeper into that, because for so long, it was about performance for God, and measuring up, but describe the difference and the love you felt when you truly met Christ.

Jill Cooper: Oh, gosh. It was the first time that I could really feel that and know that He loved me no matter what, that His love was not based on me being good enough, that the things that I had learned about Him many years before that were not true, and that I learned that God would truly love, that He did not condemn, that He was there for me, not against me. I was able to open up to Him, and as I learned in Bible studies, and I just grew in my knowledge of who He really was, I was able to trust Him, and surrender more of my life to Him. He replaced a lot of the anger with redeeming love, that He Himself paid the price so I didn't have to. It was truly a time that I felt I had borders, I had rules, I had ... I was being led by something bigger than me, so I didn't have to create my own little world, which was definitely crumbling.

Audra Haney: After a number of years of stuffing the emotion and the memory of your abortion, how was the memory of that triggered again?

Jill Cooper: I was working in Miami. I was driving for my work to and from homes, because as a physical therapist, I was doing home health. I heard a ministry on Focus on the Family, an interview with a woman who had said that she was talking about her past abortion, and she said something to the effect of, "The babies were not mad at their mothers," that they were in a place, and that they didn't hold that against the mothers that had abortions. I felt that I needed to even pull over that time. It had just struck me. It was God speaking to me directly through that radio ministry, that it was okay to actually think about the abortion, and to ask God for forgiveness, and to ask Him for healing, because it wasn't something I needed to hide from anymore, that He was there for me, and my baby who was in heaven was okay, and that she had forgiven me.

Audra Haney: I think that is so powerful, and even though you were a believer, you still had a lot of hard things to work through, and it was so important to address those. Tell me about some of the struggles you are still having because you had buried those issues deep inside your heart.

Jill Cooper: Even as a Christian, I needed healing from my past, and I did go to a Christian counselor for a few years after that to deal with some of the past issues that I had, and to let God in, and to hear what the counselor was going to ... What she shared with me that God, who God really was, and how He could forgive me, and redeem my past. I truly think that my forgiveness was immediate, but the healing process took many, many years.

Audra Haney: Talk to me about God's healing power to give you freedom from that shame. I think it's something people think, "Oh, maybe I'll never be free from this," but talk to me about God's faithfulness through, like you said, that immediate forgiveness and the process. What difference did that begin to make in your life?

Jill Cooper: As I found out more about who God was, I was able to let go of some of the guilt that I had, that unforgiveness I had against myself, against my boyfriend and husband, against the abortionist, against even the culture that was telling me that was just a blob of tissue, that truly I was able to forgive others, and therefore God was able to really help me to heal. If I didn't get to that point, and only with God can you forgive sometimes, the big things, you get stuck, and I was stuck in that anger and bitterness, and because of the forgiveness, I was able to give to others. I was then able to be healed by God's love, and forgiveness, and mercy. How He redeems all that, when I became a Christian, I was led to volunteer in a crisis pregnancy center that was near me, and that was the first ministry I ever volunteered for. I went through training. I went through a Bible study, and I found that I was being able to use my past to help others maybe make a different choice in their lives.

Audra Haney: How did that further transform you, working in those pregnancy help centers? How did that take you even deeper in your healing?

Jill Cooper: I think when you are able to use your past, that's what God's economy, when He forgives us, and heals us from past issue, and then we use it. As I was able to use that, that compassion toward these people that maybe were coming in and considering an abortion, and I was able to say, "I was there." I know what they were going through. I was in a crisis pregnancy, and I know that even as a Christian, you can be in a crisis pregnancy and feel that you have no other choice other than abortion. I didn't have the judgmental attitude. I was very compassionate, and God used that time to heal me further, and to help me to rely on Him, because I couldn't counsel other women without His help. That kept me closer to Him, and then I truly felt like I was using my past to help others, and helping others to come to better decisions than I had, and I didn't have that in my past.

I didn't have the resources, and so as I was able to volunteer and help others, it gave me even more of a purpose, because we know that all things work together for His good, and that He, God helps us with our purpose in our lives. That was then became my purpose.

Audra Haney: Jill, that is so powerful. You eventually remarried, and some of the battles began to resurface. Talk to me about some of the circumstances that you found to be hard once again as you began to build a family.

Jill Cooper: Yeah, because as ... Sometimes even when we felt like we've been healed, something comes up, and for my second husband and I, we weren't able to become pregnant. With those years of infertility, I think the enemy was trying to tell me lies that, well, I deserved that. I didn't deserve to have a baby, that I had had an abortion. I had that chance, and so I wasn't going to be able to be pregnant. Those years of infertility I felt like I was being punished sometimes, and I had to keep running back to God, and knowing that wasn't His heart. If He gave my husband and I a desire to have children, then He was going to provide for us, and He did in a very loving way. We were able to adopt our children, and that's how He replaced that infertility to actually use our infertility to help another, other children to have a family. Those thoughts, I had to replace those with God's thoughts.

Audra Haney: I think a lot of women do struggle with that, and if they have it in their past, and they meet infertility later, it's really hard. Talk to that woman, or that man. What would you share with them if they feel like maybe God is punishing them for that decision?

Jill Cooper: One thing is that God does not condemn us. It might be that He has a better plan for her, or even just the timing that God's heart is not to punish. He wants to heal her and forgive her for her abortion, and it's a

matter of who we listen to. Are we going to listen to God's heart, that He loves us, and He is for us and not against us, that He can provide for us, and as we surrender to Him sometimes, it's in that surrendering that He then can bless us, because we want to have it our way, in our timing. The Lord always uses our trials to help us to even, to get to that point where we have to surrender. I do believe that that un ... I guess when you haven't gotten that healing from a past abortion, I think the enemy's voice is so much louder, and so that healing, I would speak to that person that maybe even feels like, yes, I've been forgiven for my past abortion, or abortions, that have they really gone through healing? If they can't talk about it with someone, then it's buried too deep, and the enemy can use that against them.

Audra Haney: What would you say to a woman who maybe has a similar past that you do? How would you encourage her?

Jill Cooper: I really feel that a lot of people shy away from even mentioning this to anyone. Sometimes their spouse doesn't even know, and because of that, their relationship is altered. They have secrets, but also when we keep anything in the dark, that the enemy is going to use that against us, and that I believe that people with a past abortion need healing. There are several different resources through crisis pregnancy centers that they ... In fact, the crisis pregnancy center across America offer Bible studies for post-abortive men and women, so that they can receive healing and God's forgiveness. Like I said before, maybe we feel forgiven, but if it's still an issue, there is even an issue ... There's post-abortion PTSD, or a post-abortion syndrome, with a lot of distress systems, that if somebody were to even look up online, they could see that possibly even becoming overprotective of a child, or not being able to really have a good relationship with their spouse, that they may be suffering from this past abortion, and they wouldn't ...

They may not even understand that that is part of the maybe unforgiveness that they are holding onto, that they haven't forgiven themselves for that.

Audra Haney: That's so good, and talk to me about a group that is often overlooked, the men that have also been a part of an abortion in the past. What words of encouragement would you have for them, and do you have any resources to recommend to them specifically?

Jill Cooper: Yes. For many years, I think I thought, "Well, men weren't really a part of it." I guess I believed the cultural saying that it's a woman's choice. Many men are really suffering from past abortions that their wives or girlfriends have had, maybe even they pressured them, or they didn't have a choice in the matter, or they found out later, after their loved one had the abortion, that God made a man to be a protector and a provider. When that's taken away, even if it was his choice, he needs

healing as well, and there are probably many resources. I know that our crisis pregnancy center offers a Bible study called Healing a Father's Heart by Linda Cockran, and she has also written Forgiven and Set Free, which is for the women after an abortion.

Audra Haney: Just in case, there is someone listening, and they have stumbled across the podcast, and for whatever reason, they have found themselves in a situation where they feel like an abortion really is the only option. What would you tell them?

Jill Cooper: I would say that abortion hurts, that it seems like an easy answer, it seems like the easy way out, it seems like the only way out for many people, but it is not. There's so many other choices that could have the baby, and place that baby for adoption. They could have the baby and raise it. I'll tell you that if you ask many of the women and men who have gone through an abortion situation, that there's not really a day that you don't really think about it. Sometimes I feel that I have been forgiven and set free. I do not have shame. I will tell anyone my abortion story, but I have regret about it, so I'm not minimizing it. It does seem like a good choice for many people, and it is legal, so you can even think it's okay, but it's really not. It hurts your spiritual, emotional, physical being, because even as a woman, our heart is to provide and protect our children. When we have decided against that unborn child, even at conception at five weeks old to gestation, this is still a human being that we have decided not ... That they would not live.

It affects you, so I guess I would just warn a person to go and talk to somebody in a crisis pregnancy center, in ... There's many across this nation that are there to help, and to also provide help and support throughout the pregnancy, and then even afterward.

Audra Haney: Do you mind just elaborating on just the resource of a pregnancy help center? Maybe they're in that hard situation, so what are some things that the pregnancy center has to offer for someone who may feel like things are hopeless?

Jill Cooper: They offer all free counseling. The pregnancy testing, limited ultrasound, and also providing things like cribs, and blankets, and clothes, and maternity clothes, and really weekly counseling through the pregnancy center. Our center offers counseling throughout the pregnancy, and then also for probably a year afterward, so that they, especially financially, diapers, and wipes can be very expensive, and all the financial things. They can give a hand. They also can help them to find maybe a home that they could live in if they don't have any resources, their family members don't want to help them, or are not supportive, pregnancy centers can find homes and give them resources for that as well.

Audra Haney: Ultimately, what would you say to our listeners about the forgiveness, and the healing power of Christ's love? What can people expect if they bring this past pain to Him?

Jill Cooper: As I said before, there is no condemnation, as Romans 8:1 says, for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. Jesus paid it all, and there is not one thing that He didn't die for on the cross. He knows your pain. He knows your decisions, and He still loves you. I believe that even in Ezekiel, we love this verse in our Bible study that says that He replaces. He says, "I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." I think a lot of people who have a past decision, a past abortion in their, and they are not healed, that they have kind of a part of them that is dead, and that until they get healed, they have that heart of stone. God can give that person, male or female, one abortion, many abortions, it doesn't matter. He will give you a heart of flesh, a heart that is bent toward God, and that He can heal you, and take you to the next step in your walk with Him.

Audra Haney: Jill, thank you so much for all the amazing encouragement, insight, and the resources that you have shared today. Would you mind just closing out our time together praying for a woman, or a man, who have had an abortion in their past, and really want to bring this pain to Christ?

Jill Cooper: Yeah. Lord, thank You so much that You are our perfect Heavenly Father, no matter if we had fathers that weren't there for us. Lord, You are always there for us. You never leave us or forsake us. Lord, thank You so much that You are so involved with our lives, that You know every hair on our head, and You know everything we have done in the past, and You still love us. You died for us even when we were still not with You, even though we may have even hated You or turned our backs on You. You died for us, and Lord, thank You so much for all the men and women that listen to this podcast that will get the hope that You have, that You have given them. Lord, that through Jesus, that we all have hope in You, for healing, and for redemption, for forgiveness, and that You would give us a life that would be abundant and full, and Lord, that You would heal us from this past abortion or abortions. Any past mistakes that we have made, You died on the cross for, and we know that.

We thank You so much, Lord, for loving us well, and for blessing us in this program, and this ministry. We thank You so much. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Audra Haney: Thank you so much for joining us today. We know that our God is a God of great compassion and healing, and can use your past to bless and help heal others. Please join us next week if you have a heart for this



issue. We talk to one of the top pro-life speakers in the country about how you can dive in and help, and the difference that pregnancy help center can make in the lives of unborn children. If you want to learn more about Jill, find additional resources, today's show notes, transcript, and more information about Your Newborn Promise Project, please visit [grahamblanchard.com](http://grahamblanchard.com).