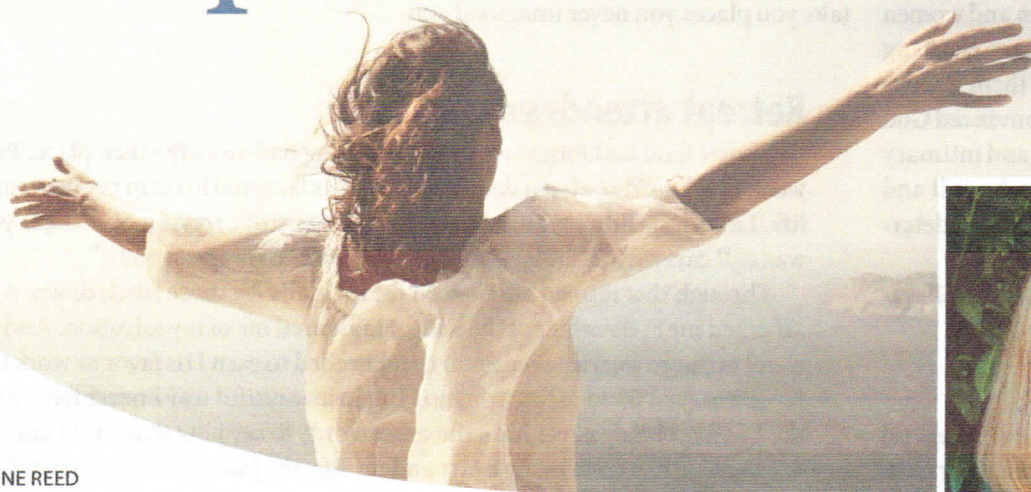


# HEALING AFTER ABORTION

## Deeper Still Retreats



BY ANNE REED

A paper cut heals quickly. But some wounds are deep – contaminated with debris and bacteria. Ignoring their existence only makes them worse.

When abortion takes the life of an innocent child, it creates a deep and complex wound in the postabortion mother. That inner destruction eventually reaches the surface. The father and others close to the mother often experience a profound sense of regret and loss.

Though many are able to fight off the feelings of regret as a hasty decision of their youth, time has a way of taking its toll, requiring more energy to manage encroaching feelings of self-hatred and disgust.

Karen Ellison, author of *Healing the Hurt that Won't Heal* is acquainted with the suffocating shame experienced after abortion.

### Her story

Ellison grew up in a Christian family and attended a Christian college. But after compromising her biblical values sexually, she was suddenly faced with a crisis pregnancy. Panic became her driving force.

Abortion had never been a topic of discussion in her family, nor had she

ever heard it addressed in church. Now, suddenly, it was the center of discussion – the perceived solution to seemingly impossible circumstances. Before she knew it, her parents were driving her to a neighboring city to “alleviate the pressure” so things could be normal again.

**God's presence is so strong, and you have a team of people loving on you and helping you. ... The result is profound healing in a short amount of time.**

KAREN ELLISON

On a cold day in January, 22-year-old Ellison fell on a destructive sword. Abortion. Nothing was ever the same again. It changed the trajectory of her life.

“Even though I didn't understand a lot about human development as we do now, I knew in my heart it was wrong,” Ellison told *AFA Journal*. “I allowed fear and pressure to outweigh my convictions.”

After years of shame and hiding, Elli-



Karen Ellison

son began to experience healing, and she started leading post-abortion Bible studies to help other women discover the same freedom she was experiencing. Through the years, she became painfully aware of challenges that hindered spiritual growth in postabortion women.

### Burdened for others

Ellison was burdened by the patterns she saw in the groups of women who participated in postabortion Bible studies but often failed to thoroughly commit and follow through to completion, considering it an academic exercise rather than a deep work of the heart.

“So, I began to ask the Lord,” Ellison explained, “and He began to show me about a retreat setting where you are literally pulling yourself away from the distractions, creating a mindset where you can open your heart and go deep.”

She began by applying core truths needed to heal postabortion wounds, and she incorporated them into a weekend retreat. During seven years of prayerful experimenting and fine tuning, she

was increasingly seeing spiritual fruit in the lives of participants, both male and female. And she began to sense the Lord had a bigger plan in mind.

Ellison continually sought God for ways to work backward from the abortion experience, to help men and women identify and demolish any existing strongholds that had made them vulnerable to abortion. She was convinced God had more depth of healing and intimacy in store for those willing to be still and receive from Him. And she was determined to be a part it.

Thus, the ministry of Deeper Still was launched in 2009.

### Endless reservoir

Through the Deeper Still weekend retreat, a team of compassionate servants unite their gifts to create a beautiful, welcoming, safe environment where worship, healing prayer, confession, art, and tangible expressions of grief and forgiveness are integrated. (See sidebar.)

“God’s presence is so strong, and you have a team of people loving on you and helping you,” Ellison explained. “The result is profound healing in a short amount of time.”

For many attendees, the retreat is their first step of healing. Others are

further along, perhaps unable to perceive the possibility of more grace, peace, and freedom. But Ellison is convinced there is no end to the reservoir of God’s grace.

“As long as you come with an open heart, I guarantee you the Lord will take you places you never imagined you

even needed to go,” said Ellison. “That’s the beauty of it. You can have people in the room at absolutely different places in their healing journey, and it doesn’t matter – the Lord is going to meet everyone where they are.”

### Retreat attendees said:

I knew God had forgiven me. And healing had already taken place. But ... I went. I had no idea what a deeper healing God wanted to do in my heart and my life. I also just didn’t realize what a load I was still carrying over these years. I was still carrying those labels: “abortion” and “damaged goods.”

Through that retreat, He allowed me to finally lay those labels down. And He affirmed me as daughter of the King. He assured me of my salvation. And [there were] no more worries ever again that I needed to earn His favor or work for His favor. He even freed me to worship Him in a beautiful way I never felt worthy to do. I will probably never have the exact words to say how thankful I am to God for what He has done in my heart and my life, my family’s life, my friends’ lives. But I will tell you it’s been an honor to go deeper still, and to get the privilege of going deeper still yet.

— Emily

The only way I could deal with [the abortion] was to pack it, stuff it, and put it in a secret place only I knew about. I could almost convince myself it had never really happened. ... But then something would happen that would cue my mind back to that waiting room. And I would realize again that it was all far too real. ...

Deeper Still has allowed me to be able to restore my walk with Christ. ... Jesus loved me. He touched me. He healed me. And He restored me. And I will never, ever be the same again.

— Scott

## Learn More

### Symptoms and scars

You may have an abortion-wounded heart if you...

- Lack the freedom to share your abortion experience with others.
- Avoid the subject of abortion because you feel people will see it written across your forehead.
- Expect bad things to happen to you as punishment for your abortion.
- Fear meeting your child in heaven.
- Engage in self-punishing attitudes and behaviors.
- Are preoccupied with thoughts surrounding your abortion experience.
- Feel you’re all alone with your emotional pain.

[godeeperstill.org](http://godeeperstill.org)

### Hope and healing

#### Retreat sign-up

Each Deeper Still area chapter conducts its own fundraising initiatives, making registration for the retreats free for attendees. Available in Arizona, California, Georgia, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

- Video testimonies (Click on “About us”)
- Prayer partnership
- Starting a Deeper Still chapter in your area

*Healing the Hurt that Won’t Heal: Freedom for the Abortion-Wounded and Help for the Church They Fear* is available at the website or other booksellers.

[godeeperstill.org](http://godeeperstill.org) | 865-524-3313

