

# Abortion: why women choose it

by Paul Herring, President, ProLife Media Inc

The terrible tragedy of the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean has killed an estimated 200,000 people.

In one day, however, the world sees an average of over 191,000 unborn children killed.

Currently, on a national basis, around 100,000 children are killed each year in Australia by abortion. For every three children born alive, one is killed by abortion. Recent comments by some knowledgeable physicians suggest there may be as many as one abortion for every live birth in Australia.

There are overwhelming numbers of unborn children being killed and huge numbers of mothers and families being devastated, often in unseen ways, by these abortions.

Recent cutting-edge research on the psychology of pro-choice women offers insight into why the pro-life movement has not been as effective as it might be in persuading women to choose life.

This research, conducted in America by the Vitae Caring Foundation, shows why the traditional approach has had so little effect.

## Study results

The summary report of the study *Abortion: The Least Of Three Evils* suggests that women do not see any 'good' resulting from an unplanned pregnancy. Instead they must weigh what they perceive as three 'evils', namely, motherhood, adoption and abortion.

Unplanned motherhood, according to the study, represents a threat so great to modern women that it is perceived as equivalent to a "death of self". While the woman may understand that it is not her own literal death, her emotional, subconscious reaction to carrying the child to term is that her life will be "over". This is because many young women of today have developed a self-identity that does not include being a mother.

It may include going through college, getting a degree, obtaining a good job, even getting married someday; but the sudden intrusion of motherhood is perceived as a complete loss of control over their present and future selves. It shatters their sense of who they are and what they will become, and thereby paralyses their ability to think more rationally or realistically.

When these women evaluate the abortion decision, their perception of the choice is either "my life is over" or "the life of this new child is over". Given this perspective, the choice of abortion becomes one of self preservation, a much more defensible position, both to the woman deciding to abort and to those supporting her decision.

Even those women who are likely to choose life rather than abortion do so not because they better understand foetology or have a greater love for children, but because they have a broader and less fragile sense of self, and they can better incorporate motherhood into their self-identity.

Adoption, unfortunately, is seen as the most 'evil' of the three options, as it is perceived as a kind of double death. First, the death of self, as the woman would have to accept motherhood by carrying the baby to term. Further, not only would the woman be a mother, but she would perceive herself as a bad mother, one who gave her own child away to strangers. The second death is the death of the child "through abandonment". A woman worries about the chance of her child being abused. She is further haunted by the uncertainty of the child's future, and the possibility of the child returning to intrude on her own life many years later.



A study in America has shown that many women choose abortion because unplanned motherhood represents a threat so great that it is perceived as a "death of self"

A woman desperately wants a sense of resolution to her crisis, and in her mind, adoption leaves the situation the most unresolved, with uncertainty and guilt for both herself and her child. As much as we might like to see the slogan 'Adoption, not Abortion' embraced by women, this study suggests that in pitting adoption against abortion, adoption will be the hands-down loser.

## "No real choice"

Abortion is considered the least of three evils because it is perceived as offering the greatest hope for a woman to preserve her own sense of self, her own life. This is why women feel protective towards the abortive woman and her right to choose, and deeply resentful towards the pro-life movement, which they perceive as uncaring and judgemental.

Of the scores of women involved in the *Abortion: The Least Of Three Evils* study all agreed that abortion is killing. The women also believe that abortion is wrong, an evil, and that God will punish a woman who makes that choice.

However, these women feel that God will ultimately forgive them, because He is a forgiving God, because the woman did not intend to get pregnant, and finally, because a woman in such a crisis has "no real choice".

In fact, while abortion itself is seen as something evil, the woman who has to make that choice is perceived as courageous, because she has made a difficult, costly, but necessary decision in order to get on with her life.

## Advertising helps

Following this study, the Vitae Caring Foundation funded, produced and presented a series of 30 second television commercials, with the primary focus of changing the culture of abortion which presently exists in American society by altering the mindset of the people.

In America the medium of television has been used exclusively as they believe it to be the most influential one of our time. But how effective have these ads been?

In Missouri, the abortion-to-live-birth ratio has been reduced to half the national average through the screening of these commercials and in Colorado, the rate was cut by 57 per cent between 1997 and 2000 as a result of the ads.

ProLife Media has now formed an incorporated organisation owing to a generous grant by the Gateway Baptist Church in Brisbane, which the founding members attend. Their objective is to repeat and duplicate the approach of the Vitae Caring Foundation. But they need help and financial support in order to raise over the \$1 million needed to duplicate the USA experience and achieve similar changes in Australia.

For more information contact Paul Herring c/- paul@prolife media.info or visit [www.prolifemediainfo](http://www.prolifemediainfo)