

*Do what you feel in your heart to be right - for you'll be criticized anyway. ...No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. -Eleanor Roosevelt*

# You Are a Good Woman



You are a good woman. It may be hard for you to believe that right now, but deep in your heart you know you are making your decision out of a place of goodness. This pregnancy and whatever choice you make about it doesn't change that.

For some women abortion is a clear, certain decision. For others it can be really hard. For most women it is somewhere in between.

## Many Women Have Chosen Abortion

For thousands of years women all over the world have wanted to prevent pregnancy and birth when they are not ready to have a baby. Since 1973, when the United States Supreme Court made abortion legal, there have been more than 53 million women in America who have chosen abortion. Those abortions also involved nearly 53 million men. One in three American women will have an abortion during her life. Each day, good women and men just like you make that choice.

## There Are People Who Want to Make You Feel Bad

Here is something that may surprise you. Even though you know you are doing the best you can, there are people who are working hard to make you feel guilty and ashamed. These are the people who want abortion to be a crime. For nearly forty years since abortion became legal, these people have spent millions of dollars and used politics, religion, intimidation, terrorism, threats, arson, violence and even murder to try to make it so you don't have a choice.

This may already be a hard time for you. It's not fair, but making you feel even worse is part of their plan. They believe that if you feel guilty and ashamed it will be hard for you to stand up for yourself, let alone for any other women. The people who don't want women to have any choices act as though they speak for God—as though they are God. And they think if they act righteous enough they might be able to control you.

The anti abortion activists are a small group. They are not necessarily bad people. Some of them may be very sincere in their beliefs. But they think they are right and everyone else is wrong. The only thing they care about is their crusade to make abortion illegal. You may have had to walk past some of these people if there were picketers outside the clinic.

## They Don't Know You

These anti-abortion people don't know you. They don't know what's in your head or your heart. They don't know about your life or your values. They don't know if you have other children depending on you. They don't know if the man involved is someone you can trust or depend on. They don't know if you are ready to be a mother, or if you can afford to care for a child. They don't know your spiritual or religious beliefs. They don't know your situation. They don't know what you want. And the truth is...

*They don't really care.*

## When People You Care About Judge You

It is very hard when you think that people you care about will judge you—or think that you are doing a bad thing. It hurts when people think less of you. How can you feel sure of yourself and your own decisions when you don't have support from people who are important to you? At those times, you need to be as sure as you can of what is right for you. One of the challenges we all face is learning to trust our own hearts and being OK even if other people don't agree. It is also important to find someone, even if it's only someone at the clinic you are going to, who isn't going to judge you.

Sometimes criticism may come, not from friends or family, but from your church. No matter what you think the rules of your religion are, what is the heart of your faith? What does your religion teach about forgiveness? How does it provide support and comfort for you at times when there is no easy decision? What does the *God inside your heart* say?

## How You Feel is Up to You

You are making two very important decisions. The first decision is whether to continue or end your pregnancy. The second decision is how you're going to *feel* about that afterwards. Most of us don't think that how we feel about things is a decision. But who else is in charge of your thoughts and the meanings you give to things?

When you hear something over and over, like "abortion is murder", it can get into your head—like a commercial. But if you really believed that abortion was the same as murder you probably wouldn't even be considering it.

When you're facing tough times, it can sometimes feel like you are a scared little kid. That can give an angry, judgmental voice of authority, like the anti-choice protesters, even more power. The anti-abortion people have not been able to make abortion illegal yet, but they have made many women doubt their own goodness.

## Honor Yourself

One woman could have an abortion and might forget how hard she worked to make a good decision—and how much she cared. Later, she might decide she is a bad, selfish woman who will never be forgiven.

A different woman could have an abortion and might remember her reasons for choosing abortion and have compassion for herself as a human being in a difficult situation. She could accept whatever feelings she is having, and decide she is a good woman doing the best she can for herself and her family. Which woman would you choose to be?

## Do You Judge Yourself?

It never feels good to be judged from the outside. But it can be even harder when the mean, critical voice of judgment is coming from inside your own head. Women so often judge themselves without mercy. It's like we have a horrible bunch of picketers in our own minds! Who benefits when you punish yourself? Who pays the price when you are suffering? You, of course. But also the people closest to you—your family and friends. If you decide to treat yourself with kindness you give a gift to yourself and everyone close to you.

## In Real Life Things Are Not Black and White

In real life things aren't just one way or another—black or white. We are likely to have mixed feelings about difficult issues. But when it comes right down to it, how we live our lives, whether we are miserable or happy and how we feel about ourselves, is pretty much our own decision. What kind of life do *you* want to have?

## Women Know

Can it be that women know something very deep inside, even deeper than fear and shame? Can it be that women know it is their responsibility to decide when to bring a new life into this world? Can it be that *you* know better than anyone else what is right for you? If you doubt that, think for a moment-- who else would you trust to make this decision for you? Women are not the enemies of our children—even those we decide not to bring into the world.

## Don't You Deserve to Feel Peace?

If you have thought carefully and made the best, most responsible choice you can, then what's all this judgment and criticism doing in your head? **Don't you deserve to feel peace and resolution?** If you begin to doubt yourself, remember your goodness. You could take a deep breath and put your hand on your heart and say to yourself, "*I am a good woman doing the best I can*".

**You are a good woman.**



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