



THE CHRISTIAN  
INSTITUTE

# Choose Life

WOULD YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO CHOOSE LIFE?



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# Contents

Introduction	3
EJ and Colin	5
Hilary	7
Charlene	9
Lynn	11
Brian	13
Melanie and Damien	15
Gary	17
Bonnie and Phil	19
Adele	21
Lesley	23



# Introduction

Abortion has been legal in England, Wales and Scotland since 1967, and in Northern Ireland since 2020.

Women in England and Wales can now kill their babies in the womb at any time without sanction, although the 24-week limit still applies to doctors. In Scotland, abortion is legal up to 24 weeks for most reasons, while in Northern Ireland, abortion is available on demand, for any or no reason, up to twelve weeks. In all parts of the UK, abortion because of disability is allowed up to birth.

Tragically, there are now estimated to have been around 11 million abortions in the UK. And the hidden heartbreak is that significant

numbers of those women who chose to cut short the life of their unborn child live to regret that decision, struggling to come to terms with the repercussions. But there is another choice.

In this booklet, you will read about people whose lives have been affected in some way by the prospect, the threat or indeed the reality of abortion: stories from mothers who now regret the abortions they had; stories about parents who were offered abortions and said no; and stories from children who are grateful their mothers chose life.

Each story is unique and moving, but they all speak as one: abortion is not the answer.

*The Bible teaches that human life is precious and murder is wrong, because we are made in God's image (Genesis 9:6). The Bible establishes God's relationship with an individual from conception (Jeremiah 1:5, Psalm 139:13). The incarnation of the divine Son of God began at conception, not the manger in Bethlehem (Matthew 1:20).*

*The Christian Institute therefore affirms that human personhood begins at conception and that the human embryo is precisely that – a human. Not only is abortion wrong, but so is any practice that deliberately destroys human embryos.*



Watch all the stories contained in  
this booklet online at: [the.ci/chooselife](https://the.ci/chooselife)



Shalome



Colin and EJ



*'God has a purpose for every life'*

# EJ and Colin

Shalome Harwood was born with the rare condition, semi-lobar holoprosencephaly, which hampers brain development.

That she lived at all is because her parents, Colin and EJ, rejected doctors' diagnosis at 20 weeks that she was "incompatible with life".

As they put it: "We were adamant that we wanted to choose life and I found it quite upsetting really that abortion was always talked about at every single meeting and appointment".

"At those appointments, they should have said to us 'If you're choosing life then there's this support in place, there's hospices, there's hope there'".

Doctors later told them that Shalome "might survive",

but added, "if she does, you're looking at minutes, hours".

This was more than enough for these loving parents who said she 'enriched their lives', counting "every day a blessing". She lived for four years.

***“We believe that God has a purpose for everyone, even Shalome.”***

Giving advice to parents receiving a similar diagnosis, Colin says, "don't jump to conclusions, find out what support there is available" for a child with special needs, adding: "just because the child is in the womb doesn't mean it's not a life".



Watch Shalome's story online at:  
[the.ci/shalomesstory](https://the.ci/shalomesstory)



Hilary

*'No disability is without hope'*

# Hilary

The late Hilary McDowell was a successful dramatist, writer and broadcaster. She had multiple disabilities from birth and was given a life expectancy of just three weeks.

Doctors said she would never walk and possibly never talk, but her success in multiple fields saw her travel the globe for writing and speaking engagements.

When Hilary was born, doctors told her mother, “Take her home and love her and bury her because even if she did live’ ... ‘she would have no quality of life’”.

But though she experienced difficulties with walking, hearing and eyesight, she also authored five books and performed poetry, among many other achievements.

She felt she had many reasons to be positive, saying God “got inside the situation and transformed it”.

Hilary always recognised the “tragedy and the heartbreak” experienced by mothers of severely disabled children.

Yet she believed “no disability is without hope”, and encouraged mothers to consider the benefit of carrying their baby to term so that, even if the baby doesn’t survive, they can still say: “I gave it life in me for nine months”.

***“Every child deserves life... I’m wanting in a humble way to be the voice of the baby, crying out and saying ‘I’m here, I’m alive, I want to live’”***



Watch Hilary’s story online at:  
[the.ci/hilarysstory](https://the.ci/hilarysstory)



Charlene



Myla



*'All she ever knew was love'*

# Charlene

Charlene McCabe's daughter Myla was diagnosed with Edwards' syndrome, a severe genetic disorder, at 34 weeks. It is often described as being 'incompatible with life'.

The multiple complications arising from the condition mean that life expectancy is usually quite short and abortion is offered in most cases.

But for Charlene, the nearly two hours she had with Myla after birth were the "most precious" of her life; time she "will never forget" and wouldn't swap for "anything else in the world".

"Abortion was something that we never would have considered, but I know it's talked about quite a lot with children with Edwards' syndrome", she says.

"I just think you have to give your child a chance", she reflects. "I think for your own peace of mind, to get through the rest of your life – you always have it in your head that you carried your baby as long as you could and you gave them the best chance in life."

"Abortion isn't the only option. You can go on to have your child, you can have those precious moments with your child and I think it's something that will live in your heart forever".

***“I had an hour and 55 minutes with her and it was the most precious hour and 55 minutes of my life – time that I’ll never ever forget.”***



Watch Charlene's story online at:  
[the.ci/charlenesstory](https://the.ci/charlenesstory)



Lynn

*'We're not designed to take the  
lives of our children'*

# Lynn

For many years, Lynn Coles has helped women recover from the trauma of abortion.

Lynn was persuaded to have an abortion herself aged just 18, after her doctor told her that “the baby wasn’t really a baby”, just a “blob of cells”.

***“Abortion is offered to women as a quick solution to the problem, but what women don’t realise, like myself, is that it just gives us new problems.”***

“And it’s often we go into denial because it’s the only way you’re going to go through with the abortion.”

“You have to dehumanise and detach yourself from the baby because you think this is the only way out of this situation.”

“It’s not a religious thing to regret your abortion, it’s actually a human thing and a woman thing – because we’re not designed to take the lives of our children.”



Watch Lynn’s story online at:  
[the.ci/lynnsstory](https://the.ci/lynnsstory)



Brian



*'We shouldn't be valued  
because of what we can do'*

# Brian

Brian Gault was born without arms after his mother took the drug thalidomide during pregnancy.

But he has lived a fulfilling life, having taken on board the advice to “look to your potential and not your limitation”.

Reflecting on his life, in which he has authored the book ‘Look, No Hands!’ and is an in-demand public speaker, Brian has not forgotten the difficulties of his early years.

“It was hard for my mum, because mum had a nervous breakdown. It was a big shock to her, and at that time she didn’t have any answers – nobody told her why I had no arms.”

After watching a programme in 1993 about children in Brazil affected by thalidomide, he wrote his book to raise money to support them.

He and his wife have now been to Brazil many times and have helped well over a hundred families.

***“We’re all special. Although I have a disability, we shouldn’t be valued because of how productive we can be, what we can do. We should be valued for just being who we are.”***

He is thankful that abortion wasn’t legal before he was born, believing he “wouldn’t be sitting here today” if it was.

“What would my mum have done? I’m sure there’d have been a lot of pressure on her to have aborted. I am so thankful my mum wasn’t put under that pressure.”



Watch Brian’s story online at:  
[the.ci/briansstory](https://the.ci/briansstory)



Melanie &  
Damien



*'The doctors' diagnosis was completely inaccurate'*

# Melanie and Damien

Melanie and Damien Sheenan were placed under immense pressure to abort baby Joshua when doctors made what was eventually shown to be an incorrect diagnosis of a severely life-limiting condition.

After the 20-week scan, the Sheenans were told that Joshua's brain and spine had not formed.

In subsequent weeks, as they attended a specialist hospital in Sheffield for further scans, abortion was recommended.

"They felt that the child wouldn't survive birth," says mum Melanie, "and if it did it would be so profoundly disabled that, their words were, it would 'have no quality of life'".

"I was put under immense pressure to go ahead with the abortion."

"They didn't even think that his life would begin" adds father Damien, "the doctors said that Joshua would be incompatible with life".

At appointments, they would be introduced as 'the couple who was continuing with the pregnancy against medical advice'.

"We were made to feel that we were doing something terribly wrong by wanting to keep our baby."

But the diagnosis was "completely inaccurate", says Melanie.

"I'd advise that no matter what, the baby should be given a chance".

"If we had gone with the doctors' diagnosis, he wouldn't be here today and I'd be living with the fact that I'd had an abortion and all the effects that might have on me".

***"...no matter what, to still carry on because it's life, and God still has a plan no matter what the outcome will be"***



Watch Melanie and Damien's story online at:  
[the.ci/melanieanddamiensstory](https://the.ci/melanieanddamiensstory)



Gary

*'I knew that she loved me no matter what'*

# Gary

Gary Moore was conceived through the violent rape of his 17-year-old mother.

He spoke passionately of his deep joy in life and his gratitude to his mother for not giving in to pressure to abort him.

It was “always one of those pillars of life where I knew that she loved me no matter what”.

Gary would not be alive today if his mum hadn't chosen to continue with her pregnancy in the face of severe family pressure to abort. In the end, his mother was told to leave the family home.

Moving away was a decision that he recognises “must have been incredibly tough for her when the other option was to have me aborted and stay at home”.

He recalled the moment when his mother told him how he was conceived as “like a blow to the jaw”.

But “the overall impression I always had from her was that I was loved and cherished”.

Looking back on his life, he said: “I have lived such a fulfilled life, coming from what some people would class as very poor beginnings.”

Although Gary knows his mum would look at him and see her rapist, he said that just speaks of his mum's “incredible love”.

She could “see somebody who had hurt her so badly” but “still loved me for me”.

***“It seems to me that God's been saving my life even before I was born.”***

In a final message to women who may find themselves in the same position, he simply says: “give that little child that real gift of life, because it's worth it”.



Watch Gary's story online at:  
[the.ci/garysstory](https://the.ci/garysstory)



Bonnie  
& Phil



*'There's a purpose for every  
life, no matter how short'*

# Bonnie and Phil

Bonnie and Phil Walker's baby girl Grace died 15 minutes after being born.

They said they had "definite peace" that it was the right thing to see the pregnancy through after being offered an abortion.

But the couple were stunned by the stark choice doctors presented to them.

During a routine scan, Grace was diagnosed with a serious birth defect called anencephaly, in which a baby is born without parts of the brain and skull.

They were told it was therefore not a "viable" pregnancy and were offered an abortion within the week. "It was that blunt", said Bonnie.

"There should never be a choice like that", added husband Phil. "She was a little human being and that's one of the

reasons why we called her Grace. By the grace of God we had this time with her."

He described the 15 minutes they spent with baby Grace as "15 minutes of pure love", with Bonnie affirming: "There's a purpose for every life, no matter how short."

The gift of life was the seven months before she was born. He added: "We see it as a gift from God and that gift wasn't for us to take away."

***“It was never the wrong choice. The wrong choice would have been to take her away without ever having seen her face and known her.”***



Watch Bonnie and Phil's story online at:  
[the.ci/bonnieandphilsstory](https://the.ci/bonnieandphilsstory)



Adele



*‘Women deserve to hear  
the truth’*

# Adele

Adele Best has twice experienced the frightening reality of abortion and now passionately believes that abortion is never the answer.

She says women deserve to hear the truth about the “horrific after-effects”, which can leave women with problems that last a lifetime, including feeling depressed and suicidal.

Adele found her first abortion at the age of 25 to be a very frightening experience. The Marie Stopes clinic she attended had the “façade of being a professional medical establishment” but she received no counselling prior to her abortion.

After a second abortion, which “nearly destroyed” her life, she became pregnant for the third time and sought help from her parents.

Having her daughter, Adele says, is the best thing in her life.

“I would say now that I really think abortion is never right in any circumstance because of the damage it does to a woman”, she said.

***“the amount of joy she brings me every day is priceless”***

“Women also deserve to hear the truth about the horrific after-effects of abortion.

“Nobody ever warns them, nobody ever tells them – the media doesn’t, the abortion providers don’t. Women deserve the truth and they’re just not hearing it.”

Abortion is “never, ever, the answer. It’s just going to give you a lot more problems than what you realise and those problems are for a lifetime.”



Watch Adele’s story online at:  
[the.ci/adelesstory](https://the.ci/adelesstory)



Lesley

*'I got over the rape but I never  
got over my abortion'*

# Lesley

Raped at the age of 13, Lesley McAskie's parents took her from Northern Ireland to England for an abortion.

***“My abortion affected my life for 37 years... I got over the rape but I never got over my abortion experience”***

A nurse explained the abortion procedure in a way that has stayed with her throughout her life.

She recalled the nurse saying: “They just put this instrument into you and then they chop it all up and they’ll suck it out into a bag and then they throw the bag in the bin.”

Aside from that one conversation, just before going in for the abortion, she received no other information.

She says: “I was given no counselling beforehand. I was given no counselling after it”.

The abortion has cast a long shadow over her life. But her first-hand experience also makes her well-placed to offer advice to women considering abortion in any circumstances.

“Don’t go into having an abortion because it’s a quick fix – it’s not. That abortion experience will stay with you for the rest of your life. It will haunt you”.

“If a woman finds herself pregnant as a result of rape, she really needs to have some care. She needs compassion, she needs counselling, she needs a great deal of support. She doesn’t need another act of violence in abortion.”



Watch Lesley’s story online at:  
[the.ci/lesleysstory](https://the.ci/lesleysstory)



*Choose Life*





From facing a diagnosis of 'fatal foetal abnormality' to being conceived through rape, people affected by abortion expose its trauma and reveal the courage it takes to choose life.

 Watch all the stories online at: [the.ci/chooselife](https://the.ci/chooselife)



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