

Big Issues: the beginning of life



ST JOHN'S
DOWNSHIRE HILL



Issues connected with the beginning of life can be complex ones with the potential to stir up deep feelings and possibly past hurts. As we address some of these matters in our programme of teaching on Sunday mornings, we also want to provide some information to enable people to access help or to delve deeper into the issues. The lists and sources below are far from exhaustive, but we hope that they may be of use to those seeking support or further information.

HELP FOR UNPLANNED PREGNANCIES:

There is a network of Christian centres throughout the UK, with trained counsellors, providing free and confidential counselling in a caring & non-judgemental environment for unplanned pregnancies. These centres provide information, answer questions and help clients to explore their options before making their own decisions. Advice on adoption and fostering is available, and some centres also offer advice on relevant benefits and free clothes and baby equipment. Details of the services offered and the locations of the different centres can be accessed here: <https://pregnancychoicesdirectory.com/>

The closest of these to St John's Downshire Hill is Choices, located in Islington. Their website is here: <https://www.choicesislinton.org>.

The organisation Life also offers counselling for unplanned pregnancies. Their website <https://lifecharity.org.uk/> also has information and resources (including videos and briefing sheets) on a variety of issues such as abortion, life before birth, reproductive technologies etc.

HELP FOLLOWING AN ABORTION, MISCARRIAGE OR BABY LOSS:

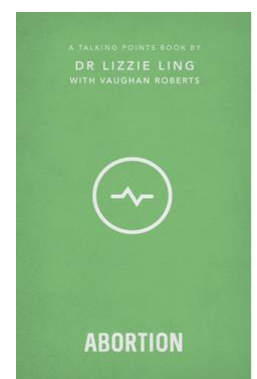
The network of centres mentioned above and the Life website also offer free and confidential counselling following an abortion, or following a miscarriage or baby loss. Once again, this is delivered by trained counsellors in a caring and non-judgmental manner.

In addition, the **Open** initiative, <http://www.weareopen.org.uk/>, aims "to create an environment within churches where unintended pregnancy and post abortion concerns can be shared with grace and compassionate understanding, and to develop support for those who have experienced miscarriage. We offer resources which will help those affected by these issues to address their concerns in a safe and confidential setting." Their help includes post-abortion recovery weekends retreats and 'Loved' miscarriage healing retreat days.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THESE MATTERS:

Books:

Abortion by Dr Lizzie Ling with Vaughan Roberts. This is a short introduction to the subject in the 'Talking Points' series published by The Good Book Company. "In this brief book, the authors survey the Christian worldview and help us to think biblically, speak wisely and act compassionately as we engage with the people, the questions and the heartache surrounding abortion."



Matters of Life & Death by John Wyatt. This is a comprehensive book written by a Professor of Ethics who is also a specialist in the medical care of newborn babies. *“John Wyatt examines the issues surround the beginning and end of life against the background of current medical-ethical thought. Writing out of a deep conviction that the Bible’s view of our humanness points a way forward, he suggests how Christa health-care professionals, churches and individuals can respond to today’s challenges and opportunities.”*

Pregnancy and Abortion - Your Choice by Dr M. Houghton. This book considers the different options available following an unplanned pregnancy. It may be of help not only for those needing to make a decision themselves, but also those supporting them and those wishing to be better informed. *“This handbook, written by a team of women and men, covers parenting, abortion and adoption. With chapters for teenagers, men and other major issues. In Part 1, an experienced female pregnancy counsellor provides a simple step-by-step guide to making your own decision. Part 2 explores the options ahead for all involved and answers questions you may have. Part 3 digs deeper into health-concerns after abortion that are often overlooked.”*

I'll Hold You in Heaven by Jack Hayford. This book offers healing and hope for those who have lost a child through abortion, miscarriage or still-birth. It does focus, however, mainly on abortion, and so may not be as appropriate for the other situations of loss. *“Jack Hayford provides compassionate answers to troubling questions for those who have lost a baby. The freeing truth of the Word of God promises that, like David, you will hold your child again in heaven.”*

Organisations:

CARE is a Christian agency conducting research and advocacy in a variety of areas including abortion and end of life issues: <https://care.org.uk/cause/abortion>. CARE also seeks to support churches in providing practical care for those facing unintended pregnancy or needing help following abortion or miscarriage.

A charity offering counselling, support and advocacy on pro-life issues: <https://lifefcharity.org.uk/>.

Other resources and films:

- A beautiful video that shows you the stages of human development over the 40 weeks of pregnancy in just 6 minutes: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/325006095?byline=0&portrait=0>
- Image-maker Alexander Tsiaras shares a powerful medical visualization, showing human development from conception to birth and beyond. https://www.ted.com/talks/alexander_tsiaras_conception_to_birth_visualized
- Current UK abortion statistics (including the reasons for those abortions) can be found here: <https://www.cbruk.org/abortionstatistics2019>
- The pro-choice documentary film **Hush** honestly investigates the effects of abortion on women: <http://hushfilm.com/>
- The film **Unplanned** (from the book of the same name by Abby Johnson) tells the true story of how the director of a Planned Parenthood clinic in Texas (which provided abortions as well as birth control) became a pro-life advocate shortly after assisting in an actual abortion procedure for the first time. *“Unplanned brings us an eye-opening look inside the abortion industry from a woman who was once its most passionate advocate.”* <https://www.unplannedfilm.com/>