

# S O U L w o u n d s

## Twenty-five years after Roe vs. Wade women seek healing and redemption

By John Wheeler Jr.

BARBARA KELLY was barely 18 when she ran away from her home and parents in Maryland in 1979 to move in with her boyfriend and his parents. Within months she was pregnant, and her boyfriend's mother advised her to do the only sensible thing — get an abortion.

Not coming from a Christian home, Barbara had no solid moral reason to refuse. Some of her friends had already had abortions, so Barbara went to the Planned Parenthood clinic in Maryland. A year later, when she was pregnant again, she had a second abortion.

Barbara was not so much callous as she was casual about the whole thing. "There wasn't a high moral code with my friends," she recalled. "You just did whatever seemed right."

She didn't think there was any harm done; after all, abortion was legal, and she was just having some blobs of unwanted tissue removed.

Ten years later, she had become a Christian, marrying a man in her church. But after giving birth to one healthy daughter, Barbara suffered a miscarriage. When the doctor told her he would have to perform an emergency "D & C" procedure, she became hysterical.

"I was totally freaking out," Barbara told *Christian American*. "It was so similar to the abortion process, and all those old memories suddenly started coming to the surface. I couldn't handle it. I became a basket case."

Even after she left the hospital, Barbara realized that her problems were far from

being over. She found herself filled with emotions she didn't know she had — feelings of guilt, shame, unforgiveness and explosive anger. It all traced back to the abortions from a decade before.

"It's legal, so you're not supposed to have any emotional baggage," Barbara explained. "But that's a lie. I just had it all stuffed inside, and finally it came up and I had to deal with it."

It took Barbara more than a year of prayer and counseling with a caring woman from her church before she was

finally able to make peace with her past. But she believes that a lot of other women still have their painful pasts "stuffed" inside.

**The verdict of history** When the Supreme Court ruled that abortion was legal in 1973, abortion advocates promised that women's lives would benefit greatly because of the landmark *Roe vs. Wade* decision.

Twenty-five years later, the verdict of history is in, and the evidence shows



Bill Boyer

starkly that real-life results are far different from the rosy projections.

Instead of finding themselves freer and happier after choosing to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, literally millions of American women have found themselves the unwitting victims of a cruel hoax.

Although the number is relatively small, some women have died from botched abortions. But of the survivors, many more women have experienced chronic physical problems and severe emotional distress as a result of abortion.

"There is a growing awareness in the public sector, as well as in the churches, that we have a lot of walking wounded," said Vicki Thorn, executive director of the Milwaukee-based National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing.

These problems are "soul wounds," Thorn says, and they are rooted in guilt and grief. Common symptoms include low self-esteem, depression, anger and shame. Thorn's list of post-abortion symptoms is three pages long and runs the gamut of emotional problems.

Some women experience nightmares, dreams about babies being attacked, or even auditory hallucinations of a baby crying. Others have flashbacks of their

her national ecumenical toll-free referral hotline each month know better.

"We don't have to tell them that they've done wrong; they already know it," Thorn says. "When they come, they're telling you they murdered their child."

That guilty knowledge, whether conscious or buried deep inside, produces what psychological experts now call Post-Abortion Syndrome (PAS), a type of post-traumatic stress.

Thorn travels widely conducting training seminars for counselors who want to help these wounded women. Most of her pupils are affiliated with Project Rachel, a Catholic ministry which Thorn founded in 1984 and which is now established in 75 percent of the dioceses in America and is beginning to spread into Canada and Europe.

But within the past year other denominations have started to attend her seminars, Thorn says, as have public sector care-givers. Her ministry is one of many with a small staff but a big mission and a national outreach.

**Awareness in the Church** In Chattanooga, Tenn., Charlie Wysong fields an average of 20 calls per day from wounded

He has also been successful in referring legal help for malpractice lawsuits against negligent abortion providers, and some clinics have closed as a result of his efforts.

But his primary emphasis today is on meeting the emotional needs of these women with kindness and compassion.

"My ultimate goal is to bring a woman into fellowship with Jesus," Wysong said, "and along the way to sue abortion clinics."

One of his most memorable experiences came in 1989, when he got a call from Rhonda Bright, an 18-year-old African-American from south Georgia. Rhonda had been a straight-A student at Warner Robbins High School, where she was voted Miss Congeniality.

But when she was 16, Rhonda got pregnant and went for an abortion at Atlanta's Midtown Clinic. Her grades fell to Ds and Fs, and she became depressed and withdrawn before finally dropping out of school. Two years later, she was still having extreme stomach pains that would double her over without warning, and nobody could tell her why.

Wysong took her to a doctor who found that most of the lining of her uterus had been torn out during the abortion. The doctor helped Rhonda, and Wysong personally led her to Christ.

Rhonda soon went to work for the American Rights Coalition as a secretary, determined to help others who had made the same mistake she did. Later she married and had a healthy baby boy.

Out of every 10 calls on average, two will need medical help, one will need legal help, but all 10 will need spiritual help, Wysong said. Eight of them will respond to the Gospel.

"There's a fine line between condemning the sin and showing compassion," Wysong explained. "Until a woman is willing to confront the fact that what she did was wrong, and repent, she can't find forgiveness and true healing."

Wysong added that one abortion clinic in Ohio regularly used to refer their patients to him for post-abortion counseling. "They just didn't have any answers for them, except 'get over it,'" he said.

Wysong sometimes refers his callers to local churches, but most often he sends them to a crisis pregnancy center for compassionate post-abortion counseling in a non-confrontational setting.

**'At the beginning of the pro-life movement, we emphasized the innocent babies being slaughtered. Now we look at these women in crisis and see an incredible opportunity to minister the love of God.'**

abortion experience, triggered by something like the sound of a vacuum cleaner that reminds them of suction equipment.

Sleep disorders are common, as are thoughts of suicide and bitterness toward men. Many women plunge into drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity and dysfunctional relationships.

Thorn says the key to healing is to acknowledge the woman's loss in a non-judgmental way.

"Too often, the society, our churches and our families do not recognize abortion as a legitimate loss," Thorn explained. "In fact, the societal message says that abortion solves a problem and that it is a non-experience."

But the 300 to 400 women who call

women who respond to radio spots or to his billboards posted all across the country asking the question "Problems ... after an abortion?" and offering medical, legal and emotional help.

Wysong, an evangelical father of 15, was a business executive before he got involved in ministering to post-abortive women more than a decade ago. From his office window he could see the women entering the local abortion clinic, and he could see the pained looks on their faces after they came out. He knew that these women needed God's help, so he founded the American Rights Coalition.

Wysong's initial emphasis was on providing medical help for women suffering physical complications due to abortions.

# [ T H E Y ] w e r e o u r f a m i l i e s

SINCE 1973, America has aborted more than 36 million babies. America's loss to abortion equals the population of more than 13 states — Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota. NEARLY 6,400 children die each day. More than one child dies every 20 seconds. Nearly 50 percent of abortions are now repeats, as babies follow brothers and sisters down the dark canal of death. Average household size in America has decreased to an all-time low. MORE THAN 64 BILLION diapers have not been needed since 1973. For every three nervous kindergartners enduring their first day of school, at least one won't be there to join them; this child died five years earlier. For each roomful of fidgety first-graders, more than 10 classmates never had the chance to enroll. Since 1973, at least 383,936 fewer elementary school teachers were hired due to abortion. How fittingly absurd that the leaders of the National Education Association have endorsed abortion on demand. IF ONE OF EIGHT aborted babies would have been a baseball fan, we might have cheered 185,000 more Little League teams over the last two decades. MORE THAN 166 MILLION Christmas presents will not be given because of abortions that began in 1973. More than 25 million bikes weren't manufactured. IN HIGH SCHOOLS across America, more than 11 billion final exams were not turned in to be graded. Last June, perhaps 640,000 high school diplomas weren't handed to relieved graduates who should have been there. Without abortion, probably 3,200,000 freshmen would be enrolling in colleges this semester. This gap



will now increase each year, because the abortion rate climbed after 1973. BUT THE MOST important losses are beyond our ability to estimate. We will never be able to count the kisses not given, the hands upheld, the cuts we would have mended, the tears we

could have dried. Songs without number will never be sung or written. Untold games will go unplayed. WE HAVEN'T NEEDED pianos, trumpets, basketballs, coonskin caps, prom gowns, dictionaries, libraries, skateboards, swimming lessons, cassette players. AND YES, you can hear some people saying, "But look, we also don't have the high school dropouts and junkies we would have had either." And that's partly right. We dragged out all the prospective losers we could find and stood them up against a wall years ago. BUT WHAT ABOUT the millions of mothers who would never have had the chance in life. A chance to do what? In America, we reward initiative — we help you kill your baby. WHAT ABOUT ALL the businessmen, workers, artists and taxpayers that our lost children would have become? They undoubtedly would have helped produce a tide high enough to float many other ships. BUT IN THE FINAL analysis, numbers and dollars don't really count the cost. Because, you see, by conservative estimates, when America aborted its children, we also aborted more than 128 billion hugs. WE SHOULDN'T HAVE considered them a burden. We needed them. They were our families.

*This essay by Marla Maddoux was first broadcast on Marlin Maddoux's Point of View radio program, and is reprinted courtesy of International Christian Media.*

**Crisis pregnancy counseling** There are an estimated 3,000 crisis pregnancy centers in America, some of them little more than mom and pop operations. Most of them are scraping by from month to month, with little funding from large foundations or ministries.

These crisis pregnancy centers exist primarily to help women who are pregnant and don't know what to do, but more and more they are also counseling women who have had abortions previously.

One of the largest CPC networks is Care Net, which founded the first crisis pregnancy center in the nation in the aftermath of *Roe vs. Wade*. Today Care Net has 430 CPC affiliates.

"At the beginning of the pro-life movement, we emphasized the innocent babies being slaughtered," said Donna Warner, director of center and program development. "Now we look at these women in crisis and see an incredible opportunity to minister the love of God."

After an abortion, a woman usually enters a period of denial that may last from five to 10 years before she is able to confront the reality of what she did, and the problems that the abortion is continuing to cause in her life. By the time they finally seek help, many women are desperate.

Some women who have been through an abortion and have found healing now want to minister God's grace to others. That's where Care Net comes in, with a Post-Abortion Counseling and Education (PACE) program. PACE features special small-group Bible study courses for both men and women, available to anyone who wants them for eight dollars apiece.

*Forgiven and Set Free* is an eight-week Bible study for women, currently being offered in 324 CPCs, designed to reach Christians and unbelievers alike. *Healing a Father's Heart* is designed for men whose wives or girlfriends have aborted their child, often with the father's consent.

It was that PACE Bible study that set Barbara Kelly free. Today, a happy mother of three living children, she teaches the PACE course at a CPC in Concord, N.C.

"Through God's Word and His powerful love, the shame and grief I once experienced have been turned into joy, and I am more grateful for Jesus' death on the cross," said Barbara. "Now I can look forward to the day I will see my

other children in heaven.”

While Warner is happy to see the community at large starting to acknowledge the reality of Post-Abortion Syndrome, she believes that the secular counseling approach, which often tries to rationalize why abortion was the right choice for the woman at the time, is inadequate and incomplete.

“There is no true healing until you have the Jesus factor,” Warner added.

**Secret sins in the Church** There’s another thing that Thorn, Warner and Wysong all agree on: a high percentage of the women having abortions today — perhaps as many as one-third to one-half of them — are self-identified Christians.

In one women’s Bible study on the book of Ephesians, the group leader was astonished to learn that seven out of the 10 participants were post-abortive women.

“Abortion is an issue we look at as a non-Christian, or secular problem,” Warner said. “But it’s in the church, in the pews. We see the entire gamut — even pastor’s wives who have had abortions.”

These women may be hurting even worse than others, because they know that what they did was a terrible sin against God, and they expect to be punished for it. What’s more, they feel no liberty to share their hurt with others in the church.

“Fear drives these women, fear of how others will react, and ignorance of the Word of God,” said Bobby Eubanks, pastor of the 1,000-member Ridge Baptist Church in Summerville, S.C. And he’s a man who should know.

Ardently pro-life, Ridge led his church several years ago to support a crisis pregnancy center in its community. But he was unprepared for the call he got from one of his flock who was working there as a volunteer counselor.

“There’s a pregnant young girl here, Pastor, and I need to know what to do,” the lady said. “It’s someone you know.”

The girl was Eubanks’ 18-year-old daughter, who had moved out of his home and ended up pregnant and unmarried.

“It was a tough eight or nine months,” Eubanks told *Christian American*. “I was a pastor and I preached against sin, but I had to stand with my daughter.”

Eubanks was prepared to leave the church, but the elders prayed him through

the difficult situation, which threatened to split the church. In the process, the youth pastor’s wife confessed to having an abortion, as did a 60-year-old woman who had had an abortion after being raped.

“Think of that, 60 years old,” Eubanks said. “She carried that guilt for more than 40 years.”

His daughter went to a maternity home, where she met several other pastors’ daughters who were also pregnant out of wedlock. She gave birth to a healthy baby boy, now two years old. Eubanks loves to play with his boisterous grandson.

“The Bible says in First Peter that judgment begins with the house of God,” insisted Eubanks. “If Christians would rise up and repent, we could end abortion in America.”

Wysong agrees. “It is time for the Church to start functioning in its proper role as the protector of the weak in our society,” he challenged.

But for now, lack of money holds back the post-abortion counselors.

“This is not the most popular cause for donors. If we had the money to advertise, we’d be swamped. There are millions of hurting women out there, but they don’t know that these services exist.” ✧

### Post-Abortion Counseling Resources

#### American Rights Coalition

7510 Lee Highway, Chattanooga, TN 37421.  
(423) 893-7801.

Charlie Wysong, executive director.

Toll-free referral hotline (800) 634-2224.

(Evangelical. Legal, medical, spiritual help.)

#### Care Net

109 Carpenter Drive, Suite 100,  
Sterling, VA 20164.

(703) 478-5661, 478-5668 fax.

Guy Condon, executive director. (Evangelical.

Crisis pregnancy network, Bible study curricula.) Toll-free order line (800) 237-5030.

#### National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing

P.O. Box 07477, Milwaukee, WI 53207-0477.  
(414) 483-4141, (414) 483-7376 fax.

Vicki Thorn, executive director.

Toll-free referral hotline (800)-5-WECARE.

(Catholic. Spiritual counseling, ecumenical referrals.)

# W H Y t h e s e w o m e n s w i t c h e d

By Carolyn Curtis

■ A BABY GIRL is developing in the womb of Ginger Houston-Ludlam. Her name is Carmen, and she’s fighting for her life. Not only is she a Down Syndrome (DS) baby, but other complications of the pregnancy threaten her survival. Mother Ginger submits to intra-uterine blood transfusions every few weeks.

“We’re fighting tooth and nail to keep her alive,” says Mark, father of Carmen and husband of Ginger. “We believe God does not make mistakes.” Adds Ginger: “Carmen is perfect just the way He made her. That’s true for all babies, whether they happen to be inconvenient, unwanted or ‘defective’ in our human opinion.”

In 97 percent of cases like Carmen’s, the DS baby would be aborted after diagnosis. And Carmen’s struggle is even more remarkable considering her mother once held a strident pro-abortion viewpoint. But like many other women who once supported a mother’s “right” to kill her baby, she switched.

*Christian American* asked her — and other women who formerly held the pro-choice position — why they switched. Where did the abortion rhetoric break down? What logic or facts changed their minds? How were their hearts changed?

**Ginger Houston-Ludlam**, Maryland mother of Alexandra, Douglas, Carmen.

I was raised in an atheist family, not wishy-washy agnostic, but atheist. When other kids went to Sunday school, my family

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went to The Center for Ethical Culture in Queens, N.Y., a humanist "church." I was raised with strong standards of right and wrong, but the basis was societal good, not an over-arching moral authority. The ultimate good was our personal self-interest, and having a good, stable society in which people behaved themselves in our collective self-interest.

From this framework, the pro-choice position was easy. Ignorant of the medical facts regarding the fetus, I thought it was just a lump of tissue which eventually would grow into a baby. This tissue could interfere with the rights of the woman to live life as she chose to live it, so according to my philosophical underpinnings, this was an evil. And disposing of this evil was a morally correct thing to do.

In college I came face to face with an evangelist who worked for Inter-Varsity. She challenged me on the slippery nature of my humanist thinking with this: "If all morality is relative, then killing people as did Hitler is just another point of view that is different than mine."

Ouch! I couldn't live with that. That led to a very intense re-examination of my entire worldview, which eventually led to my becoming a Christian.

But my switch to the pro-life position happened gradually after my conversion. My opinion evolved from "abortion is always right" to "well, maybe it's not a good thing but some women have to do it," to "it's wrong, but I'm not sure I have the right to force my opinion on someone else," to "it's wrong, period." I realized I had landed in the latter spot when I was faced for the first time with the possibility I was pregnant. I knew that I *could not* hurt this baby. And, from that point on, I realized I had switched to pro-life.

The final switch from quietly pro-life to actively pro-life came during my pregnancy with my first child. When I felt her kick two months before she was "viable," I realized the evil that is abortion and knew I could no longer look at myself in the mirror if I did not become involved.

Now, I challenge pro-choicers one-on-one. Favorite weapons are the several medical textbooks I've found, all of which say life begins at conception. I also contact my representatives and senators, both

state and federal, when pro-life legislation is pending, and tell my point of view. Sometimes I explain I'm a former pro-choicer who has switched.

**Frederica Mathewes-Green**, prolific author and commentator, mother of three.

I was a strident proponent of the pro-choice position during the early 1970s. A favorite slogan of mine was this pun: "Don't labor under a misconception — legalize abortion." I even volunteered my time to publish the feminist tabloid "Off Our Backs."

My religious conversion came in 1974, but I didn't immediately move to a pro-life position. It happened when I read a profound two-page essay by Richard Selzer titled "What I Saw at the Abortion" in the January 1976 *Esquire*. Written in almost purple prose, it reminded me how language can change us forever.

A pro-abortionist, Selzer had arranged to witness an abortion as research. But here's what he saw as the abortionist inserted the saline solution: the needle jerked like a fishing line being tugged by a sunfish, then the motion grew fainter and fainter until, finally, it quit. Selzer wrote that he realized whatever was in there very much wanted to stay alive, and, for him, it answered the question of whether that is a live human or just a blob of tissue. His description of the event was so compelling that, for me, it answered the question of when life begins.

**Carmen Pate**, vice president of communications for Concerned Women for America, mother of three.

My switch came when I returned to the Lord after 10 years away wandering in the desert as a radical feminist. I saw myself as a victim. And, consistent with others with that view, I didn't take responsibility for my actions. Consequently, I became pregnant twice before I was married. Both times I aborted the baby.

Although I bought into the feminist rhetoric wholeheartedly and thought these women were advising what was best for me, nobody told me about the horrible consequences of abortions. For example,

I was crippled emotionally — overcome with nightmares and regrets. But I was convinced I was exercising my "right to choose" and that someday I would forget about these abortions.

The crazy thing is that when I went to the abortion clinics I really had *no* choices there. No other option was discussed. And the pro-choice community talks about how it's a private decision between the woman and her doctor, yet, I never even *met* the doctor until I was already sedated when he came in briefly to do the abortion. Also, the people who worked at the clinics carefully avoided using terms like "baby."

But when I returned to the Lord one of the first scriptures I read was that reassuring verse in Psalm 139 which tells me that He knew me even when I was in my mother's womb. From then I committed my life to getting the word out, to being a voice for life. I ran a crisis pregnancy center for two years and later became a consultant to the pro-life community.

**Rev. Joy Moore**, director of women and ethnic ministries at Kentucky's Asbury Theological Seminary.

I've come to realize that, as a Christian, I operate under a higher law than the law of the land which keeps the back alley abortions illegal by allowing clinical abortions to be legal. I've given up what the civil laws would allow me by submitting to God's law.

**Barbara Curtis**, California newspaper columnist, author and mother of 11, including one Down Syndrome child.

As a radical feminist for 15 years, I based my philosophy and politics on the belief that all gender differences were the result of culture conditioning. My personal awakening from the slumber of feminism was empirical: when I heard my first son at nine months making noises like cars, trains and planes, I realized my daughters had never done that!

With this very simple observation, my feminist foundation began to crumble. It meant all my beliefs up to that point — including the pro-life/pro-abortion

# WHY these women switched

issues — were open for reconsideration.

During my pregnancy with my second son, I saw an ultrasound and realized how much denial was involved in the abortion rights movement, which I had helped to organize in the early 1970s. Had we known the enormity of what would be unleashed — the disposal of 1.5 million U.S. babies a year and the resulting cultural chaos — I wonder how many of us would have been so eager to achieve this right?

**Joan Kotjarapoglus**, *Pennsylvania teacher, mother of two adult daughters.*

My pro-choice position was part of my buy-in to the feminist movement. I still consider myself a feminist (using my own definition, not that of the National Organization for Women) — a rational feminist supporting equal pay for equal work, equal responsibility at home, equal respect for alternative management styles, etc.

Coming from the late 1960s and early 1970s I recognized how women historically have been devalued for their contribution to the fabric of society and denied control or choice in their lives in areas such as career advancement.

So pro-choice seemed to follow this line of reasoning — women having control over their lives, including “control over their bodies.” But, in truth, that phrase never sat quite right with me.

I figured that the time to exercise control was before conception, not after.

Conception was a God-ordained occurrence, and termination as a human decision for reasons of convenience or family-planning was not responsible behavior. It was murder. It was against my understanding of how God expects me to conduct my life according to His instructions in scripture. It violated one of the Ten Commandments, and it violated my conscience. I still wrestle with pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, with pregnancy that genetic counseling indicates would produce gross deformities and severe drain on emotional and financial resources of the parents.

I need guidance from an ethicist on those. But as a mere “choice” issue, my mind is made up.

**Rep. Linda Smith (R-Wash.).**

I resolved in my mind the issue of whether there should be exceptions for rape and incest when it occurred to me that a baby’s humanity — and that baby’s right to life — are *not* determined by whether the father is a law-abiding citizen or a criminal.

**Camilla C. Hersh, M.D.**, *Obstetrics, Gynecology and Infertility, practicing in Virginia.*

From a medical point of view, there are no viable arguments to support partial-birth abortions. Rarely in medicine can you say “never,” but this is one clear exception; it is *never* medically necessary to partially deliver a baby vaginally and then kill the baby. The practice should be considered malpractice.

It has nothing to do with what Christians think. It’s simply bad medicine.

By the way, I thought this *before* I became a Christian, just based on my medical training. However, now that I’m a Christian, I’ve decided I must speak the truth to counter what the abortion rights industry is selling to women — a barbaric procedure which is cruel both to the women and the babies.

**Terry Schlossberg**, *executive director, Presbyterians for Pro-Life.*

For years I was a captive of the culture. I was a Christian at that time, but I wanted to witness to women who weren’t. And so to accomplish that, I immersed myself in their world, so that I could speak their language and would be credible to them.

An outcome was that I became enamored by the women’s movement. I took in all the ideologies and one of those was to favor a woman’s right to choose. I held that position at the same time that I held my babies! I saw no contradiction between my own mothering instincts and what I perceived to be a woman’s right to make this choice.

A number of years passed, and I began to experience a real emptiness in my spiritual life. I turned to the Bible and took it more seriously than ever before. As I read scripture intentionally, many

of my beliefs were challenged because they were contra-biblical.

The last to tumble was the notion that women had a right to choose whether their babies would live or die, the ultimate control over another person’s life.

**Donna F. G. Hailson**, *American Baptist minister, researcher, writer and speaker on culture, evangelism, Christian apologetics.*

My life had hit bottom. I had left my husband and taken my daughter to live in another community. Over the next months I kept the Bible under my pillow, knowing the answers were there. It was frustrating — I had been in the church, so I thought I should have known these foundational truths yet somehow my spiritual life had gone terribly awry. In the meantime, several people could see this and were praying for me.

Then in 1982 Billy Graham came to Boston. It was at his crusade that I went forward and made a commitment. I had been intellectualizing my Christianity before that, and now my heart was changed. God’s truths gradually became obvious. One was the sanctity of life, the understanding that God cares for a woman with an unwanted pregnancy. He will make a situation which seems impossible to her into a blessing if she will let Him.

Soon after the crusade the Holy Spirit began to rearrange my priorities, and I realized I was not honoring God by breaking up my marriage. The Lord also drew my husband to Him, and we celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary by renewing our vows. Years later, after I was ordained, the first person I baptized was my own daughter. So not only did the Lord call each of us individually, He also restored us as a family. ☆

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