

Gianna: Aborted . . . and Lived to Tell About It

Discussion Guide

Chapter 1: Tragic Decision with a Happy Ending

How would you describe Tina's feelings as she approached Avalon Hospital? If you had been the confidant she wished for, what would you have told her?

If you were Tina, how would you explain to a stranger your reasons for seeking an abortion?

If Gianna had not been born alive, how do you think each of the following would have reacted? Why?

- Tina
- the other patients
- the nurse
- the doctor

Do you think that helps to explain public reaction to abortion in general? Why or why not?

Chapter 2: The Whole Truth

How would you tell a 12-year-old about being adopted? Aborted?

Were you surprised by Gianna's reaction? Why or why not? How do you think most children would react?

Diana said, “Gianna, I want you to always remember one thing: You were not supposed to live, but God allowed you to have life. You must always focus on the fact that you did not die—you have life. Always rejoice in that gift.” How does this apply to everyone, regardless of the circumstances of his or her birth?

Chapter 3: All in the Family

How do the following Bible passages relate to the events in this chapter?

- James 1:27
- Psalm 68:5-6
- Psalm 27:10

What do you think motivated Penny and Diana to care so much about children? How might your own family respond if you wanted to adopt a child like Gianna?

What was the “Life Book” Penny prepared for adoptive parents? What was its purpose? If you have a child, what kind of “Life Book” might he or she like to receive from you?

Chapter 4: Learning to Cope

Why might Gianna have been tempted to blame God for her cerebral palsy? What was her response to Him instead?

What physical, mental, or emotional challenges are you facing right now? Are your responses to them similar to Gianna’s? Explain.

Based on this chapter, what kinds of problems are faced by families of a disabled child? How could you be of help to such a family? If you've helped in the past, what were the rewards?

Chapter 5: New Surgery and a New Name

If you asked Gianna and Diana how they made it through all those surgeries and physical therapy, what do you think they would say?

Which of the following experiences in this chapter would have been most stressful for you? Why?

- surgery
- marital separation
- hostility from abortion advocates
- the legal battle
- Gianna's isolation at school

How would you have answered Gianna when she asked, "When's God going to heal me, Mom?" If you couldn't think of an answer, whom would you have asked for help?

Chapter 6: Her First Public Testimony

If you'd been in the audience that night, what would have made the strongest impression on you? Why?

How might each of the following people react to Gianna's testimony?

- a woman who has been thinking about getting an abortion
- a nurse who works in an abortion clinic
- a person with cerebral palsy
- someone who doubts God's existence
- a couple who has been considering adoption

What experience, condition, or talent of yours might God be able to use in the lives of others? How might He use it? What encouragement or training would you need to get started?

Chapter 7: Into the Spotlight

“I get strays,” Diana told the reporter. What does that statement say about Diana’s priorities and lifestyle? How do you and your family tend to react to “strays”?

How do the stories of Gianna and “Grandpa” compare? What do they say about the beginning and end of life?

Why did the newspaper article lead to so many calls that Gianna needed an agent? Which of the following statements best reflects your response to that? Why?

- “These organizations were just using her.”
- “God was opening up opportunities for her.”
- “Everybody gets 15 minutes of fame, and this was her moment.”
- “I guess this was a good thing, but it could easily get out of hand.”
- Other (explain)

Chapter 8: The Politics of Abortion

How would you respond to each of the following statements reflecting those made during the Alabama debate?

- “If there are no legal abortions, women will seek illegal ones or commit suicide.”
- “Children with disabilities are a burden to society.”
- “Regard for the sanctity of life has diminished since Roe v. Wade.”
- “Arguments against abortion are religious, and for one religious interpretation to become law is un-American.”

Do you think the muting of Gianna’s “and I praise God for that” was censorship? Why or why not?

“You can’t argue against a real, living human being.” How was Gianna’s existence an argument against abortion? Why didn’t opponents see it that way?

Chapter 9: Shouted Down in L.A.

Why is abortion such a controversial and emotional issue? Have you ever seen it discussed without the expression of strong feelings? If so, what happened?

If you’d been in charge of the hearing described in this chapter, how would you have handled it? If you were assigned to get all sides in the abortion debate to listen carefully to each other, how would you do it?

Do you think Jesus would have agreed to be a witness at that hearing? Why or why not? If He had, what do you think He would have said?

Chapter 10: Braving the Death-Scorts

How do terms like “death-scorts,” “pro-aborts,” “pro-choice,” and “surgical center” affect the abortion debate?

Would you participate in the kind of action Gianna did in this chapter? Would you encourage your child to take part? Why or why not?

According to this chapter, what did the National Youth Rescue accomplish for each of the following?

- Gianna
- the pro-life movement in general
- the unborn children who were not aborted

Chapter 11: A Ministry Takes Off

What was Gianna gaining by traveling and speaking full-time? What was she losing?

How would you summarize Gianna's message in 25 words or less?

How do you think Gianna would respond if you gave the following reasons for not doing something you believe God wants you to do?

- "I'm not much of a speaker."
- "People will make fun of me."
- "I'm afraid."
- "I don't have the physical strength."

Chapter 12: National TV and the Unknown Viewer

If you'd been Tina and had seen the interview with Gianna, how might you have felt? Would you have wanted to contact the girl? Why or why not?

If you'd been Gianna, what might have been your attitude toward Tina? Would you have wanted to meet her? Why or why not?

Think of a friend you've lost touch with, a relative with whom your relationship is broken, or a conflict that's otherwise unresolved. What would you like to happen in that situation? How can others pray about it?

Chapter 13: "That's What God Wants Me to Do"

Why do you suppose Gianna is rarely asked about her biological father? How do attitudes about fathers tend to figure in to the abortion debate?

Based on the following statements, how would you describe Gianna's outlook on life? How does it compare with yours?

- "I forgive my biological mother . . . because that's what God wants me to do."
- "If I had the chance of changing my past, I wouldn't do it. . . . I'm happy with my destiny and with what life has given me."
- "I have hope in Jesus and a family that loves me."

How would you explain the doctor's apparent change of mind between 1984 and 1992 about late-term abortions? What changes of mind have you seen regarding abortion in the statements of politicians, media commentators, and friends? Have any of your opinions on abortion changed over the years? If so, how and why?

Chapter 14: Answering the Skeptics

When it comes to getting accurate information about abortion, what sources do you trust? Why?

What do you think of the charge that Gianna was being "used"? If you were Gianna, would you want to be involved in the pro-life movement? If so, why? If not, why not?

Does this chapter prove the skeptics wrong? What roles do statistics and science play in the abortion battle? What role does faith play?

Chapter 15: All Things Work Together

How would you answer this question from the author? "Why would a new single parent take into her heart and home a second daughter with cerebral palsy, a 96-year-old homeless man, an unmarried, pregnant woman with a small son, and three abused dogs?"

Which of the following do you think had the greatest influence on Diana's pro-life involvement? Why? What factors have influenced your own views on abortion?

- giving her life to Christ
- seeing the movie *The Silent Scream*
- not being able to have more children
- her parents' history of taking kids into their home

Why did Gianna fear that her appearance on *A Closer Look* hadn't been successful? How do you decide whether something you've done because of your beliefs has been worth it? When has an apparent failure turned out to be a success?

Chapter 16: Reaching Out in Love

How is the idea of celebrity important to this chapter? What aspects of being "famous" and meeting well-known people could be positive? What might be the risks?

What audience needs did Gianna's concert in Fremont reveal? How could a person without Gianna's platform reach out in love to others?

Look again at the examples of letters Gianna has received. Which can you identify with? If you were Gianna, how might you respond to them? How might someone like you help people like Shannon, Donald, Danae, and Phil in your own community?

Chapter 17: Unexpected Clues

What did the cases of Gianna and Dr. Waddill have in common? How were they different?

Why did reporters focus on Gianna's status as an abortion survivor rather than her ambitions as a musician? What would you like to be known for? How will you respond if God wants you to be known for something else—or nothing at all?

Have you ever had an experience like the one referred to in Genesis 50:20? If so, what happened? How can you be on the lookout for such experiences in the future?

Chapter 18: A Gathering of Survivors

How do you feel about comparing abortion to the Nazi Holocaust? Why do you feel this way?

Gianna said, "Some [abortion survivors] from other countries were totally joyous, but those from our country were upset about their situation—even though they didn't have disabilities." What might account for that difference?

How would you explain the following reactions to the public visibility of abortion survivors? Do you agree or disagree with the reasoning of those who made the statements?

- From Denise Lachance, spokeswoman for Pro-Choice Network: "We know who the real abortion holocaust victims are—the women who died from back street abortions, from self-induced abortions in their bathrooms. What this really shows is the crying need for access to legal abortion early in pregnancy."

- From Dr. Margaret Somerville, director of McGill University's Centre for Medicine, Ethics, and Law: "When you recognize that you would have killed this person, who is now standing before you, you're quite horrified by the thought that that's what you would have done. It's a very powerful message."

Chapter 19: Looking for Gianna's Birth Mother

Pat Rutherford said, "I only do adoptions because God says do 'em." What do you think he meant?

How did becoming a Christian lead to Rutherford's career change? Has your faith ever led you to leave or accept a job? What happened?

What might have made Rutherford skeptical about Gianna's story? Why had others accepted it at face value? Can you think of a case in which Christians believed something that "supported the cause" but turned out not to be true? If so, what happened?

Chapter 20: Confronting the Doubts

Why did the author feel it was important to find Gianna's birth mother? Why was Gianna reluctant to meet with her birth mother?

Have you ever been encouraged to meet or call someone in order to reconcile or discuss an awkward situation? How did you feel about it? What happened? If you had the meeting or made the call, was the difficulty worth it?

Why was it important to wait until Gianna was ready to meet her birth mother? Are you facing any situations in which waiting patiently is the best approach? How can others support you as you wait?

Chapter 21: Tina's Story

How would you describe Tina's life in 10 words or less? How might Gianna's life have been different if she'd been raised by Tina?

What kind of influence did each of the following have on Tina? If you'd known Tina, what influence might you have had on her?

- Planned Parenthood
- Gianna
- the reporter
- Joyce's family
- Tina's eldest brother

Tina felt freed from guilt after talking with the reporter and Diana. When have you felt most guilt-free? Why? If you're struggling with guilt now, which of the following might help?

- prayer
- talking with your discussion group
- meeting with a counselor or pastor
- asking someone's forgiveness

Chapter 22: Becoming a Young Woman

Gianna and Diana expressed concern about the effects of abortion on other family members. How might each of the following be affected?

- teens whose siblings were aborted before or after them
- surviving twins
- grandparents

Read Jeremiah 1 and Philippians 2. Why did Gianna cite these as favorite Scriptures? What significance do these chapters hold for you?

Gianna liked the youth retreat because people treated her normally—not as an abortion survivor or a disabled person. Have you ever been treated as a “category” (representing a race, nationality, age group, gender, marital status, etc.)? If so, how did it feel? What did the experience teach you?

Chapter 23: What’s Next?

In what ways did Gianna change between the early chapters of this book and the final chapter? In what ways did she change those around her?

What do you conclude from the fact that the abortion doctor went on to own 46 clinics?

- It’s a fallen world.
- He must be a good businessman.
- The rain falls on the just and the unjust.
- People’s hearts are getting harder.
- Other (explain)

What are the dreams of each of the following people? How do they compare to your dreams?

- Gianna
- Diana
- Penny